

Finishing the Race

by Jim Cymbala

To finish the race and persevere in the Christian life, we need to love people who disagree with us, avoid hardening our hearts, focus on today, and hear God's voice every day.

Duration: 43:19

Scripture: Hebrews 3:7-19, Hebrews 10:24-25

Topics: "Finishing Well"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of people who appear to be serving God but ultimately fall away. He references examples from the Bible, such as Demas who abandoned the ministry, to illustrate this point. The speaker emphasizes the importance of hearing God's voice and having a personal relationship with Him, as it brings a transformative change to one's life. He urges listeners to trust in God's plan for their lives and not resist His calling, warning that disobedience can lead to a hardened heart and negative consequences.

Transcript

For the last 400 years, there's always been differences among Christians. And one of the important lessons about being a good Christian, a loving Christian, is to love people who you don't exactly see eye-to-eye on on every verse in the Bible. Do you get that? There are born-again believers who believe a little bit differently than I do.

They believe the same on the fundamentals. Christ is the Savior of the world. He was born of a virgin.

He's coming back. He's the son of the living God. Those are the essentials.

There's only one God. There's not 11. Those are the basics of the faith.

But about prophecy, about other things, there's disagreement among Christians. Christians don't see everything the same on the Antichrist and the rapture and the millennium. Is it a literal 1,000 years? Or is that symbolic language in the book of Revelation? And so on and so forth.

How many times ought you to serve communion in a year? Some people do it once a year, once a month, whatever. How do you baptize? Jesus said, go into all the world baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And yet in the book of Acts, whenever they baptize someone, it says they baptize them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, what's the difference? Should we baptize Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Or should we say, I baptize you in Jesus' name? And you can look at the scripture and discuss that with anyone. One of the major differences for the last 400 years has been on the question of, can a Christian lose their salvation? There is one school of thought, and they have plenty of verses to back it up, that believes in eternal security, that once you are a Christian, there is no way you could fall from grace and you could end up, in the end, being lost for all eternity. And there are verses, you know, anybody who comes to me, I'll not only never cast them out, but nobody can pluck them out of my hand.

And certainly the Bible teaches us that as long as we're trusting in Christ, the devil cannot steal us from him, no demons can overcome us. As we're trusting in Christ, we are secure. How many say amen? We don't have to wake up every morning and say, I wonder if I'm gonna make it through today.

God is gonna keep that which we've committed to him. And yet, there are verses in the Bible that have such sober warnings that it makes you stop and step back and say, yo, what is that about? Because that's serious. What is that telling us? There seems to be this mixture in the Bible, and maybe God never intended for us to come up with a system, but to preach those promises of God and secure in Christ.

And when we come to the warnings, to look at the warnings and say, God, help me to work out my salvation with what? Fear and trembling. For it's God who works in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. This is one of those verses that we're gonna, I feel in my heart, God wants me to speak to you about today.

And it's gonna bring us down a certain thought pattern which is different than God is singing over us, which is different than he'll welcome me and all of that, which reminds us of another thing that I think is a sign of maturity. Christian services, meetings, should never be the same. God is a God of diversity.

No two snowflakes that have ever fallen are exactly the same. There's variety of color in the garden and trees are different. God is, look at the choir.

Everybody is different, right? Everybody is different looking. There's variety in God's kingdom and that means there's a variety in services. Every service shouldn't have the same temperament and tone to it.

God is good and we worship him at every meeting. But depending on what the subject is, some meetings you just wanna run around the building and praise God. Other meetings you just wanna weep and say thank you for your love.

And other meetings, God is searching our heart and it's a different kind of service. So never make a prototypical service. Never made, praise God, we're gonna have church.

And that becomes so, so redundant and so predictable. Now, if you only have meetings where you're jumping and shouting and praising God, it can get very shallow. But if you only have meetings where God is searching and that can get like depressing and morose.

So God is a God of variety. And if you read the Bible, the Bible is telling us different things at different times. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

Be still and know that I am God. Well, what should I do? Make a joyful noise or be still? It depends. Am I right or wrong? How many in your own day and in your own life, you've had seasons that are very different in your own life, right? So now we come to the book of Hebrews.

The reason the writer, who we don't know who it is, who wrote Hebrews, he's telling the Jewish believers that it's better to trust in Christ and it's better to be a Christian than it was ever to be Jewish under the Mosaic economy and under the law of Moses and with Aaron as the priest. In other words, better than the temple, better than the sacrifices, better than the priesthood, better than anything in the Old Testament is Jesus Christ. This is a new covenant that God has made with us and it's better than the old covenant, which the Jews were the recipients of in the Old Testament.

So the book of Hebrews starts out by the writer saying, Jesus is greater than any angels. Angels play a prominent part in the Old Testament. Jesus is greater than angels.

Then he goes on to say, Moses was a great man, but Jesus is greater than Moses, and he shows why. Then he says, Aaron was the high priest and he went into the holy place representing the people, but Jesus is greater than Aaron because he's entered into no building. He's entered into heaven to represent us.

So that's the gist of the book of Hebrews. Then in the middle of that is he's proving that Jesus is greater than Moses and then he comes up with this as he's talking about Moses versus Jesus. Old Testament versus new, and here's what we read.

Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. In other words, the real thing hadn't come yet, but Christ is faithful, not as a servant, but as a son over God's house, and we are his house if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. So as the Holy Spirit says, today, what day? Today, if you what? Hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.

He's speaking about the Old Testament Israelites. During the time of testing in the desert where your fathers tested and tried me and for 40 years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation.

And I said, their hearts are always going astray and they have not known my ways. So I declared, God says, on oath in my anger, they shall never enter my rest, probably signifying going into the promised land. See to it, brothers, he's speaking now to Christians.

A Christian is called a brother or a sister, not people who just go to church. So he's speaking to believers. 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's called today so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Now 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, notice the repetition.

Repetition always means emphasis in the Bible. Today, if you hear his what? Voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion. You know what, let's go back and read that again.

That's a deep part of Scripture, isn't it? Do you get the warning in it? Go back to the beginning. We have come, Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future, but Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house.

We are, yes, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. So as the Holy Spirit says, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion during the time of testing in the desert where your fathers tested and tried me. And for 40 years, they saw what I did.

That is why I was angry with that generation. And I said, even though they were Israelites, even though he brought them out of Egypt, their hearts are always going astray. They have not known my ways.

So I declared on oath in my anger, they, those people who don't listen, those people who have hardened their heart, they will never enter my rest. I will never let them see the promised land. See to it, brothers, that none of you, Jim Cimbala, and the rest of your brothers and sisters, has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

But encourage one another. That's why we're here today. Encourage one another daily, as long as it's called today, so that none of you may be hardened, notice what sin can do.

It hardens the heart that you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ. Yes, if we hold firmly to 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. And now what he's pointing to here, brothers and sisters, is the Israelites who came out of Egypt. Just think of it.

They saw the 10 plagues that God sent on Egypt. They saw the miracles that God did. They saw Passover night, when they had the blood on the door, and they saw God faithful to the promise, when I see the blood, what? I will pass over you.

They saw all of that. They got to the Red Sea. What happened? They came through miraculously through the Red Sea.

When they were needing water, what did God supply? Water. When they needed bread, what did God supply every single morning for 40 years? Manna. And after seeing all of that, unbelief got in them, and they drifted away, and their hearts got hard, and God said to that generation that came out of Egypt, not one of you will ever see the promised land because you didn't trust me.

You sent out those spies, and when they came back, they gave a negative report about how strong the armies were there, and you chose to believe them instead of my promise? You weren't listening to my voice of what I said I would do, and you said, no, we're gonna die. We should've go back to Egypt, and when I heard that, I said, okay, it's gonna be on you now. You won't see the promised land.

And they wandered for 40 years. You know why? God let all of them die, and he let the young generation that they were worried about, they were crying over their children. Our children are gonna die.

We're never gonna make it. God said, no, your children will go in the land, but you won't. So obviously, this is not your jump and shout kind of verse.

This is like, have mercy upon me, oh God, and work in me and teach me what you want me to know from this passage. So now we see that we are that house. We are the house that God is creating, the temple that God lives in.

We are that house, the Bible says, if we hold firm to our faith and our confidence and our boldness. It says Moses was faithful in his house, but we are the house that Christ is building, and we're part of that house if we hold on to our, that word is courage, confidence. It actually means freedom of speech.

So now we learn that the way to persevere this message is about persevering, finishing the race. How do you make sure you finish the race? The writer says, you gotta keep the faith that you had at the beginning.

You can't get mechanical and old and dry and crusty and just fall into formalism where you sit in a church, but you've lost that bold confidence that says, thank you, Jesus, for saving me.

I know God is with me today. He's a living God. He's not a dead God.

He's walking with me. He's talking with me. When we start to lose that, we're getting into a precarious position.

The Bible says, and you are that house if you hold on to your confidence and that hope. He is coming. He will welcome me.

We're reminded as we worship God how great he is. He's alive. How many know he's alive today? Just say amen with your hand up.

Amen, he's alive. And every time we gather and when we talk to each other during the week, we should have conversations that remind us he's alive. We're in Christ.

We're saved. Our sins have been forgiven. He's coming again.

Come on, let's not be sleepy. Let's not be distracted by the things of this world. We're believers, and in a split second, everything's gonna disappear.

All houses, all apartments, all your clothes, your cars, the sports world, the movie world, everything is gonna end in a split second, and we're gonna go to see the Lord. But see, these things are only apprehended by faith. So that's why the Bible says as long as it's called today, keep encouraging one another.

Keep talking to one another. That's why the Bible says don't forsake the gathering of yourselves. Why? Every time we gather together, the prayer meeting, we encourage each other.

Our hearts can be renewed and strengthened, and that's the only kind of faith that perseveres. The argument is made by people in that first position. When they're faced with a certain dilemma, here's their argument.

You say to someone, I know someone who sang in the choir for 10 years, and now they're not in the choir. They stopped showing up for practices. Then they were called, how you doing, what's going on? And they gave a song and a dance.

The next thing you know, they had to be sat down from the choir, and then they were coming to church for a while. Then they stopped coming to church. Then they were called, and then they didn't come to church at all.

Then we went after them, and then they moved in with a girlfriend, or if it's a guy, they moved in with a boyfriend. And the next thing you know, they're denying every experience they had with the Lord, and now they're talking antichrist talk, and they're living in sin, and they die, and you go, wow, what was that about? Now, the first position would argue, oh, they were never saved. If they could die like that and live like that, they never were saved to begin with.

But that's a very hard one to follow, because we saw them, we watched them. They had fruit. They were serving Jesus.

Those were real tears that were coming out of their eyes as they were praising Jesus. They got baptized. They confessed with their mouth.

They believed in their heart. That's an argument that's very funny to get your hands around, to me at least, to just say, oh no, he served God 20 years and was a minister, and led people to Christ, and he ended up like reprobate, cursing God, denying the Bible, but he never was saved for those 20 years. That's a hard one.

That's a hard one. And we know in the Bible that certain people started the race and didn't finish it. Paul said, Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.

Demas was one of his fellow ministers. Now the Bible is telling us here in this portion, encourage each other. This shows that we're all vulnerable.

See, this humbles us. We all need encouragement. How many of you choir members have found you need encouragement? There's a lot of other voices out there.

There's the temptation of sin. Do you think Satan has given up on any of us? You don't think Satan has a plan for every one of our lives? Well, of course he does. So that's why the Bible says, as long as it's called today, don't go by the outside.

Pastor Symbol could have a suit on and be preaching the word, but you don't know what battles he's fighting. The girl in the choir in the front row, she's singing and lifting her hands, but you don't know the assaults on her mind that Satan has. This is real talk.

I said this is real talk, amen? This is the way it really is. The Bible says this is how you endure. You endure by keeping that faith fresh from the beginning and keep encouraging one another so that it's vibrant, it's alive, and don't fall into that mechanical heaviness.

Come on, we've all battled with it. How many have battled with it? Lift your hand if you've ever just found yourself like, whoa, the Bible says here in Hebrews that as long as it's called today, encourage one another. Notice the only way we can work out our salvation and keep strong, the only way you can do it is you only live one day, today.

Did you know that the Bible says Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and when? But really, to God, there is no yesterday because there's no tomorrow to God because God is eternal, he exists outside of time. He just uses those words condescendingly to identify with us because we have a yesterday, we have a today, we have a tomorrow. But God only exists in one big day called today.

So that's the first lesson we wanna learn. You only have one day. I don't care what happened 10 years ago.

You can't live off of what God said to you five days ago. You can't live off of any blessing you had when you were 14 years old or 19 years old or 28 years old. Blessings don't go on like that.

They're precious, you remember them, but today, God says, if you hear my voice. There's only one day that I live in that God can strengthen me. He can't strengthen me for Monday, it's Sunday.

I don't know if I'll be alive tomorrow. And he can't strengthen me on Saturday because Saturday's gone. The only day we have is today.

So the only day God can speak to me is today. I can't live off of yesterday. You know the old idea that some people have? I go to church on Sunday, I don't read the word the rest of the week, I don't listen to God, but I get filled up like at the gas station.

I go in, I get filled up, and I live the rest of the week. You'll never make it. How many have found you need to fill up every day of the week and sometime by the hour? Come on, am I right? So that whole idea of I go to church on Sunday, we at church, and that carries me through the week.

Sunday's coming, as if God isn't the God of Saturday and Friday. Now that's a shallow way of thinking about it. We need him every day, every day that it's today.

We gotta encourage each other, and that's why when we ask you to pray for each other, some people feel a little uncomfortable, but we're really doing what the Bible says. As long as it's called today, pray. You don't know what that young lady, you don't know what she's going through.

You don't know what anyone's going through. You don't know the battles anyone's fighting. When I used to come in here when our daughter was away, I used to come in here hanging by a thread that you couldn't imagine, wanting to break down in front of all of you, but trying to hold myself together so that I could preach and try to minister to you.

But down, discouraged, I was lower than the street curb. Just low, down. People would encourage me, and things God would minister to me.

We all fight those battles, and we all need encouragement every day, but let's bring this all together now. Today, if you hear his voice, the only way to keep strong and persevere in the Christian life is to keep hearing God's voice. Not many of you have thought of that, but notice what the writer says.

Now listen, learn from the example of the Israelites because they fell by the roadside. They didn't make it. So now the writer is saying, today, God says, today, if you hear my voice.

So what does that tell me about God? Number one, God is living. God is alive. Christ is alive, and he's speaking.

He's always speaking because we need his word. Jesus is speaking through his word, but you can read it and not hear his voice. The word has to come alive by the Holy Spirit.

So every day, the Lord wants to speak to Elisha through the word. Jesus wants to talk to her, the Holy Spirit making alive, so it's no longer ink on a page. It becomes alive.

How many ever read the Bible, and God spoke to you through the Bible, right? But I've also read the Bible where I was just doing my devotions, and it was nothing. If you asked me two hours later, I wouldn't even know to tell you what I read. That's the truth, but today, if you hear my voice.

So Jesus speaks through his word by the Holy Spirit, and then Jesus speaks sometimes directly to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Lord, help me now. Some of you, has not Jesus been speaking to you by the Spirit? Some of you have been having a voice talking to you.

You feel these little promptings. You feel these little warnings. You feel uncomfortable at times.

Don't you know that's the Lord speaking to you? Today, if you will hear his voice, do not harden your heart. He's not dead. He's alive.

Jesus is alive, and when someone's alive, they speak. He's not speaking as if he's gonna make a new Bible. He's not giving any new doctrine that will add to the Scriptures.

That's not what this is about. It's not fanaticism. It's today, if you hear his voice.

Jesus wrote seven letters to seven different churches in Revelation. They all had a different problem. They all were in a different condition, but how does he end every single letter? He that has end, let him hear what the Spirit is saying.

Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. So that tells me that Jesus is alive, and if I'm gonna endure, and if I'm gonna go to the end, I gotta fight off all the other voices that are out there. You know why people don't hear the Lord's voice and hear the Lord speaking? Because they got 1,000 voices coming in.

They're tweeting everyone in the world. They're texting everybody. They're listening to every kind of music, watching every TV, movie, sports, everything inundated by voices, voices, voices, and then you wonder, where's God in all of this? Where's God? Sit down and listen.

He's speaking, but a lot of times we avoid that and we numb ourselves with those other voices because we feel a little uncomfortable about what he might say to us. So we hide behind all this noise. I did that when I was in college.

Anything, I turned the TV on that I brought to my room because I knew if there was no noise and I laid in bed, he would come to me and talk to me and say, what in the world are you doing? How are you living? I didn't wanna hear that. Keep the TV on. Raise the volume.

But Jesus is alive and he's speaking. God is alive and he's speaking. And notice here as we bring this together, notice where he speaks.

He speaks to your heart, not to your ear. Even if you're listening to me, I'm not the voice of God, but God can use the word and this message to speak to your heart. I believe it's gonna happen in the next 10 minutes.

He's gonna speak to some of you in your heart and you're gonna hear it. Feel a warmth and you're gonna hear a whisper in your heart because that's where God speaks and that's the danger because if your heart gets hardened, you can't hear his voice anymore. Somebody says, oh, God doesn't make himself real to me.

No, he's speaking, you're not listening or a callus has formed on your heart. See, that's the point of not listening to him. Of so many other voices, the next thing you know, you get a hard heart and now you don't hear the voice anymore.

That's why he every day is trying to break us and melt us and keep us childlike so we can hear his voice because when you hear God's voice, it lifts you up. It strengthens your faith. You know the Lord is alive.

But without that, you go to church, it becomes so same old, same old. It becomes so boring. Oh my goodness.

Going to church without hearing God's voice, what a waste of time. Predictable, ah, but when he speaks. You know, he spoke to me on a boat all those years ago in Florida when I was just a year in the ministry at the Brooklyn Tabernacle and he spoke as close to an audible voice that I ever had in my life.

Believe that or not, I testify that it's true in the presence of God and did you know that I wept for four or five hours? Did you know I couldn't stop crying? I wept and I wept and I wept, why? Because he said so, he spoke to my heart and it wasn't anything like revolutionary but when he speaks, woo, changes everything in your life. How many have ever had the Lord just deal with you, speak to you, encourage you? Lift your hand, wave it at me so I know that you're with me on this. But without that, you start to get dry and mechanical and this is the warning to us.

This is what happened to Israel. Israel heard his voice. How do they miss going to the promised land? Listen, they heard his voice and didn't obey.

See, that's very dangerous. If he's talking to you and then he'll talk again and then he'll talk again and you don't obey, a hardness starts to set in. Then Israel stopped listening.

First you don't obey, then you stop listening. You don't even want to hear his voice. You're not interested in what his agenda, you have your own agenda.

I have my own agenda, I don't want to hear about the Lord. When I first got married, I was in the business world. My wife and I went to Hawaii on our vacation for \$10 because I was working for an airline and I could fly first class for nothing, basically.

And I had a plan and it was a nice life in a way. Oh, but when the Lord started speaking to me, oh my goodness, started saying, this is not what I saved you for. Oh my goodness, I tried to fight that voice off and I didn't obey.

And when you don't obey God's voice, it gets bad. Anybody here get in a bad place by not listening to his voice? He puts his finger on something in your life and he says, get rid of that, it's going to hurt you. That thing is going to bite you.

I know it looks good, feels good. She looks fine, he looks fine. It's going to bite you.

That relationship, those phone calls you're making, those emails you're sending, those text messages. And he's warned you about that, hasn't he? He has warned you. He's talked to you about that.

Now what are you going to do? Because if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Because when you harden your heart and he convicts you, you start getting hard, you lose all your joy. You get into a depressed state, why? Because he's speaking and you're not obeying.

Next thing you know, you won't be listening. The next thing Israel did, they were serving idols. Because when you don't listen and obey and serve the living God, you end up serving a dead God.

You end up serving Baal and Asherah and all those filthy Canaanite gods, idols. And this is what happened to Israel. And then when God saw that, he said, well then fine, you're not going to listen to my voice and you won't obey me? Then you won't go in the promised land.

And the writer is using that as an example to us and says, come on now, be careful. Don't let anybody be deceived by the deceitfulness of sin that you would depart from the living God. It's possible for me to

depart from the living God.

Oh Lord, help me, keep me. And the best way to be kept is speak, my Lord. Speak, Lord, talk to me.

So the Bible tells us that this solemn warning was written in love to us by God. And he says, keep your heart tender. Keep your heart soft.

That's why when some people get, they look down at people who lift their hands and they see some choir member with their hands up and crying and some of you are all stiff, aren't you? You used to do that, but now you're like mature. You think you're mature. No, you're probably just getting hard in your heart because I've had the same thing happen to me.

I saw this brother here in the blue shirt. I saw him just getting into one of the songs and praising God, I happened to notice him. And you might say, oh, that's so emotional.

That's so immature. No, that's a heart that's open to God is hearing his voice. Sometimes you hear his voice and he just says, I love you.

And you go, hallelujah, he loves me. Come on, let's all put our hands together. He loves me, he loves me.

He loves me, he loves me. In Hebrews, it tells us that they drifted away and they ended up turning away from the living God and that's why the Bible says, as long as it's called today, encourage one another. Boy, when you meet an encourager, you hold on to them.

When you're young in the Lord and a new Christian, people who sing or preach good or have a flamboyant kind of personality, you kind of are drawn to them. But the longer you walk with the Lord, the longer you love people who are encouragers. Today, if you hear his voice, so I want to close by saying this.

Look at me, everyone. What is God saying to us today? Is there any general thing I could say? Could I be so forward as to tell you something that God is saying if you would hear his voice and not harden your heart, if you would receive it? Yeah, I'm gonna say one and then I'm not gonna apply any others. I'll just suggest some things to you which I have asked the Lord to give me some prophetic insight.

I mean prophetic in the sense of something he might want to be saying to people in this room. One thing I know God is saying to all of us, whether you're a Christian or not a Christian, is he's saying this. I love you and I have a plan for your life and it's better than any other road you could ever take.

Listen, I love you. I proved it by sending my son to die for you. I gave up my son.

See those three grandchildren that I was with last night? I wouldn't give up one of them for you. Have them die for you? That would be hard for me. I'll be honest with you, I couldn't do it.

Much as I love any of you, give up Levi, give up Luke, give up Claire. See them massacred on a cross for you? I don't know. But God loves us so much, he gave his own son.

And he says, I gave it, that son, for you so that you would be saved from your sins. So turn away and confess your sin, put your faith in Christ, and then let me work out my plan for your life because it's better than your plan for your life. It's better than your mother's plan for your life.

It's better than what your friends say you should do. Let me work out my plan for your life. Will you trust me? If you, today, if you hear my voice, don't harden your heart, give me your life.

Let me work out my plan. Because if you fight against it and don't obey, you're gonna harden your heart and things are gonna be bad with you. I will chasten you, I will try to get your attention, but the Bible does say we can't fight off God.

He came unto his own and his own received him not. Why didn't he force those people in Jerusalem to serve him? Because Jesus is a gentleman. He invites, he woos, but he won't put a gun to your head.

You and I have to make that decision. Will you trust him today, his love, his plan for your life? Let me just say two other things. May the Holy Spirit now apply them to your life.

Some of you already have been hearing his voice about something going on in your life that you gotta turn from today. Not tomorrow, you gotta turn from today. You gotta never send another text to her.

You gotta rip up the phone number and never make a call again. You gotta let go of that unforgiveness and anger against that person. How many times has he dealt with you? Are you gonna harden your heart again? Don't you think he knows what's best for you? The thing that you're clinging to is a gun pointed at your heart.

When God says, give that thing up, he's not wanting to ruin our lives. He's wanting to save my life. When the Lord says, puts his finger and says, Jason, give that up, what do you think, he wants to hurt Jason? After he gave his son to die for Jason, how could he ever hurt Jason? Well, of course not.

But sin deceives us and says, no, the only way you'll be happy is to hang on to that thing, hang on to that relationship. Do those flirty emails and those things that you're involved with. And God is saying, you have no business doing that and that thing will bite you in your behind.

It will bite you in your behind, excuse the language. So don't do it, give it up. If you're here today and he's been talking to you about that then maybe God is bringing a summation to you.

This is a critical thing happening today. Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. That's what the Israelites did.

And look what they, their bodies lay, the birds ate their carcasses in the desert. They couldn't even bury them. So the birds picked away at them and they never saw the promised land because when he spoke, they were like busy signal.

No, sorry, I'm busy texting. No, I'm busy doing whatever. So if you're here today, he loves you so much.

I'll fight with you. I got a prayer band that will stand with you. I got deacons and pastors and deaconesses.

They'll just stand with you. We've all been in that fight. We're not looking down at you.

I've been in that fight. You know how many times the enemy has tried to pull me away from Christ? Are you kidding? 10,000 times 10,000. To leave the ministry, to quit, to give up.

And that's my last word. What put it over the top with God was God said to the Israelites, now go in to the promised land. What should have been an 11-day journey, they wandered for 40 years.

Listen, 11 days they could have made it to the promised land. Took them 40 years. Because they sent the spies in.

Two of the spies said, the land is with milk and honey. That's a Hebraism for it's a rich land. It's a blessed land.

And we can do it because God is with us. The other 10 said, no. We saw too many people against us and their weaponry and Jericho has walls around it and we can't do that.

And they believed those negative reports rather than believing God. And when God saw that, he got angry. After all I've done for you, you're gonna believe a lie instead of trusting me? So if you're here today and God's been telling you to step out and believe him for that something, the Holy Spirit has to show you what that something is.

He showed you there's a better life, there's a ministry, there's a calling, there's something that you've been saying, no, I can't, I can't. Be careful now, today if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Say yes to him.

But pastor, how could he do it? Listen, with God, nothing is impossible. What you and I call obstacles, God just goes and they're gone. He moves a little finger and the earth moves.

So this is a serious thing. This is a serious kind of meeting, different kind of service, but we need them. Otherwise we're gonna see people drop out and not make it.

We're all in the race, we got to encourage each other. We're telling you the truth, we have lost choir members. The first associate pastor that I ever had here ran away with a married woman in the church who had two children, stole all the money that was in the bank of our church and took off and was gone while Carol and I went on the first vacation we ever went on in the ministry.

So don't tell me that sin doesn't deceive. Don't tell me that you can't get hard. And you know what? I should have known about that man.

I'm going back a lot of years now, more than 30 years. I should have known because one day in the office, I asked him to pray and he couldn't pray for the staff. He couldn't pray.

And there was a battle going on. God was speaking and he was trying to fight off that voice. And the next thing I know, I got this horrible phone call from my friend who was kind of standing in for me while I was gone and said, you better get on a plane and cut your vacation short.

We got an irate father and husband and we got the associate pastor's wife who was devastated. And that all happened while he was coming to church leading the praise and worship. Don't tell me about, no, no, I'm in church, praise God.

Today, if you hear his voice, God stay tender. Would you close your eyes with me? Jesus, this is a hard message for me to preach, but it's a needed message because it's in your word. And you didn't call Carol and I to have a big church.

You didn't call us to have thousands of people. You called us to be faithful ministers. And as long as it's called today to encourage and warn people, to trust you, to hear your voice and to obey it no matter what.

Because if we don't listen and we don't obey, we're gonna start to get hard. Please, Lord Jesus, help those that the enemy is trying to pull down, deceive, those filthy lies. Satan, we're against you today in the name of Jesus.

And all your lies and all your little devices and your tricks, we're gonna surrender our lives afresh to you today, God. Because we need to do it every day as long as it's called today. That's for the choir members, the deacons, the pastors, the associates, me, the people in the balcony, the people downstairs, Lord, today we hear your voice.

And we want to obey it no matter what you're saying to us. If you're here today and you say, Pastor, I humble myself, that was for me. God's been talking to me about something, either to step out or to let go or whatever.

And today I will say yes. And if you need help, I'll help you. I will help you.

Listen, I've had women come here and I call the boyfriend the same day, the wrong boyfriend, and say, that's it, relationship over. No, she's not sleeping with you anymore. And she's not gonna see you anymore.

How about that? Because she's heard the voice of God. She wants to honor Christ and save her soul, keep her faith vibrant and strong. So warn lest anyone, encourage each other so that lest any of you be deceived and hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

See, you get hard. Oh, please, is there anyone I can pray for? Up in the balcony, just come downstairs. I don't care if one person comes.

I know my message is not in vain. But I believe God's talking to more than one person. You come from the downstairs, you come from the balcony, just stand in front of me.

Pastor, God's calling me to something and I wanna say yes to it. God's been speaking to me about something. I don't wanna know what it's about.

But this message confirmed it. God's speaking and today I say yes. Si, senior.

Si, senior. Digo, si, senior. I say yes, Lord.

Maybe you're getting near the fire and Satan's tempting you to just put a little finger in to play with it and say, don't worry, you won't get burnt. Listen, he'll consume you. He'll catch your whole body on fire.

He's a liar. Quiet your heart and just say, God, talk to me today. Every day, Lord, let us hear your voice.

If I get away from hearing your voice, Lord, by the spirit or through the word, Lord, we start to get dry, we get mechanical. Help my brothers and sisters to obey, Lord. They're gonna obey today.

They're gonna obey what the spirit is saying to them. Now give them the grace and help them, Lord. Help us to encourage each other as long as it's called today.

Lord, we feel so good today because we have heard your voice this morning. Through your word, it's coming. It's come through clear that you love us and you have a plan, the best plan for our lives.

And anything else is a lie. And it's of Satan because he lies whenever he speaks. So we rejoice in the fact that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us.

Thank you, Lord, for cleansing us today, not only washing them away, but you'll never remember them anymore, whatever we've done wrong. Let this meeting be a real source of deep encouragement, God, by your grace. And just give us a good rest of the day, we pray in Jesus' name.

And everyone said.

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