

The Mount Of God

Introduction. In our first lesson, we saw the need to lay aside sins that would hinder us, especially the sin of unbelief; have endurance, even as Jesus endured hostility; and, focus our gaze on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, whose own example should encourage us not to become weary and discouraged.

After reminding his readers of the value of the Lord's chastening, the author of Hebrews returns to the metaphor of "running" with a call to run with endurance; with instructions to pursue peace and holiness; and, with a word of caution, appealing to the example of Esau. The chapter ends with a description of the kingdom to which all have come.

I. Pursuing Peace And Holiness

A. Making preparation for our pursuit.

1. A call to run with strength.
 - a) We are to "strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." This is a common figure of speech calling us to shake off all weariness, to be firm and strong (Job 4:3-4; Isaiah 35:3).
 - b) We are to "make straight paths" for our feet, so that "what is lame may not be turned out of the way but rather be healed." This is another common expression encouraging us to remove what hinders our progress (Isaiah 40:3-4).
2. The implications of this call.
 - a) We respond to this call to action.
 - b) We cannot expect God to do it all.
 - c) While God will certainly help us, we expend effort (Philippians 2:12-13).
3. This call to action is not limited to strengthening yourself.
 - a) Concerned Christians "strengthen the hands ... and feeble knees" of others (1 Thessalonians 5:14).
 - b) Those who are "spiritual" should be concerned for the weakness of others (Galatians 6:1).

B. The goal of our pursuit.

1. Peace with all men.
 - a) We should not be surprised to read that we are to "pursue peace."
 - (1) Jesus is the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), and His death makes peace possible between God and man (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:13-17).
 - (2) He taught that peacemakers will be called "children of God" (Matthew 5:9). A key element of the kingdom of God is peace with each other (Romans 14:17-19).
 - b) How does one "pursue peace with all men"?
 - (1) By seeking peace with God first (Proverbs 16:7).
 - (a) We must first make our relationship with God what it ought to be.
 - (b) Through Jesus, we can be at peace with God (Romans 5:1).
 - (2) By letting the peace of God rule in our hearts (Colossians 3:15).

- (a) The Lord is able to “give you peace always in every way” (2 Thessalonians 3:16).
 - (b) The Lord imparts peace through His word and through prayer (Psalm 119:165; Philippians 4:6-7).
 - (3) By doing what makes for peace (Romans 14:19).
 - (a) Such as being considerate of their conscience (Romans 14:13-21).
 - (b) Seeking unity with compassion, love, tenderness, and courtesy; willing to respond to evil or reviling with a blessing (1 Peter 3:8-11).
 - 2. Holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.
 - a) God is holy, so His children are holy (1 Peter 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:7).
 - b) How can one pursue holiness?
 - (1) True holiness (sanctification) comes through:
 - (a) Faith in Jesus (Acts 26:18; Hebrews 10:10, 14).
 - (b) The work of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:5).
 - (c) The word of God (John 17:17, 19).
 - (2) We cooperate with God in pursuing holiness by:
 - (a) Offering ourselves as “slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:19-22).
 - (b) Perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1).
- C. Pitfalls that hinder our pursuit.
- 1. Falling short of the grace of God.
 - a) Without God’s grace, no one can be saved, pursue peace, or have the holiness necessary to see God.
 - b) But do Christians need to worry about falling from grace?
 - (1) The warning not to neglect our great salvation (Hebrews 2:1-3).
 - (2) The warning not to be hardened by sin (Hebrews 3:12-14).
 - (3) The warning to be diligent (Hebrews 4:1, 11; 2 Peter 1:10).
 - (4) The warning against willful sin (Hebrews 10:26-31).
 - (5) The warning not receive God’s grace in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1).
 - (6) The warning not to fall from grace (Galatians 5:4).
 - (7) The warning to “look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought ...” (2 John 8).
 - c) For the Christian, God’s grace can be just a prayer away (Hebrews 4:16).
 - 2. Letting a root of bitterness spring up.
 - a) Bitterness can be a stumbling block in our pursuit of peace.
 - (1) It destroys the peace within the person who harbors it.
 - (2) It can destroy the peace in the congregation.
 - b) It also becomes a stumbling block in our pursuit of holiness, for the problems it creates cause many to become “defiled” or unholy.
 - 3. Becoming a fornicator or profane person.
 - a) Fornication is certainly a pitfall to avoid.
 - (1) Fornication is a generic term for any sort of sexual immorality (premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, etc.)
 - (2) It is contrary to God’s will (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).
 - (a) Later in Hebrews, God states that He will judge fornicators (13:4).

- (b) It will keep one out of the kingdom of heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21), therefore, “flee fornication.”
- b) We must also not become a “profane person.”
 - (1) This is described as “a worldly person who profanes holy privileges by placing on them a worldly estimate” (B. W. Johnson).
 - (2) One does not have to be overtly wicked; they can displease God by simply devaluing what is important to Him.
 - (3) This was the case with Esau (Genesis 25:29-34).
 - (a) There is no indication he was a fornicator, but he was a profane person because he did not appropriately value his birthright.
 - (b) Though he later wanted the blessings of the birthright, it was too late. Despite his tears, he could not change his father's mind.
 - (4) We can become “profane” by devaluing our spiritual blessings.
 - (a) In Christ, we have a spiritual birthright (redemption, fellowship with God, the hope of eternal life).
 - (b) But we can let careers, hobbies, friends, and even families come between us and the pursuits of God. Are we willing to “sell our birthright” for “one morsel of meat”?

II. Heeding The Voice From The Mountain

A. The mountain to which we have come.

- 1. It is not Mount Sinai.
 - a) The mountain described first is Mount Sinai, to which Israel came following their deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 19:12-19).
 - (1) It was reminiscent of a volcano (Exodus 20:18; Deuteronomy 4:11).
 - (2) It frightened all the people (Deuteronomy 5:22-26; 9:19; 18:16).
 - b) We have not come to a mountain that forces us to stand “afar off.”
- 2. It is Mount Zion.
 - a) This one encourages us to “draw near.”
 - b) Zion was originally the stronghold of the Jebusites in Jerusalem that became the “city of David” (2 Samuel 5:6-10; 1 Chronicles 11:4-9).
 - c) “Zion” then referred to:
 - (1) The city of Jerusalem (Psalm 48:2; 84:7; Amos 6:1).
 - (2) The heavenly Jerusalem (Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 2:6; Revelation 14:1).
- 3. In coming to “Mount Zion,” we have also come to:
 - a) “The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”
 - (1) The heavenly city longed for by Abraham (Hebrews 11:12-16).
 - (2) The heavenly city longed for by Christians today (Hebrews 13:14).
 - (3) The heavenly city we will one day inhabit (Revelation 21:1-7; 22:14).
 - b) “An innumerable company of angels.”
 - (1) The great number heavenly servants of God (Revelation 5:11).
 - (2) Who also minister to those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14).
 - c) “The general assembly and church of the firstborn registered in heaven.”
 - (1) The church in the universal sense, made up of the saved (Acts 2:47).
 - (2) They are the “firstborn ones” who enjoy privileges of their birthright.
 - (3) Their names are in the “book of life” (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5).

- d) "God the Judge of all."
 - (1) The Judge of all the earth (Genesis 18:25).
 - (2) He is the One to whom we must give heed.
 - e) "The spirits of just men made perfect."
 - (1) Those Old Testament saints who died in faith (Hebrews 11:39-40).
 - (2) They had not been made perfect apart from us, but now they are made perfect by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:15).
 - f) "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."
 - (1) He is the Mediator of "a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6).
 - (2) The New Covenant exists because of His death (Hebrews 9:15).
 - g) "The blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."
 - (1) Abel's blood sought to shut out the wicked person.
 - (2) The blood of Jesus redeemed mankind.
- B. Why we should heed the voice from the mountain.
1. Those at Mount Sinai did not escape.
 - a) A cursory exam of Hebrews reveals this (Hebrews 2:2; 3:17; 10:28).
 - b) Thus the argument is one of comparison, from the lesser to the greater (Hebrews 2:1-4; 10:26-31).
 2. The One who speaks will shake heaven and earth.
 - a) When God spoke at Mount Sinai, the earth trembled (Exodus 19:18).
 - b) The day is coming when heaven and earth will be shaken and removed (Haggai 2:6; 2 Peter 3:10-12).
 3. We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
 - a) While everything made will one day perish, we "are receiving" a kingdom which cannot be shaken.
 - (1) Note the present tense "are receiving."
 - (2) Thus we are in the process of receiving this "kingdom."
 - b) It is a kingdom both present and future.
 - (1) We are now in the kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).
 - (2) But in another sense, we will enter the kingdom (2 Peter 1:10-11).
 - c) It is a kingdom:
 - (1) Inaugurated when Jesus ascended to sit at God's right hand on David's throne (Acts 2:30-36).
 - (2) To be culminated when Jesus returns to deliver the kingdom to God (1 Corinthians 15:23-26).
 - d) Therefore, it is a kingdom:
 - (1) "Which shall never be destroyed ... shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).
 - (2) Of which "there will be no end" (Luke 1:33).
 - e) God is "a consuming fire" (Matthew 10:28; Hebrews 10:27, 31).

Conclusion. With such wonderful blessings come the responsibility of not neglecting our great salvation nor refusing Him who speaks from the heavenly "mountain." Therefore, our goal should be as expressed by the author himself: "... let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28). With God's grace to help us (Hebrews 4:14-16), we can serve Him in a righteous manner. Are you heeding the voice from the mountain?