

This past week was a heavy one for me- great highs (2 bdays).....and deep lows (fam issues, ministry);
By Thursday I was drained, my soul weakened. And then at 11:27 a.m. that Thursday I got this text from my wife:

"We prayed for you. (her and the kids)

And we prayed that when you come home this can be your safe place (heart eyes emoji)."

There truly is no place like home. In the words of the philosopher, Winnie the Pooh *"home is the comfiest place"*

SERIES: **BETTER**

TITLE: **When far from Home**

TEXT: **Hebrews 12:14-29**

Philippians 3:18-20 (NLT) ¹⁸ For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. ²⁰ But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.

It is tempting when we are far from home, to begin to pick up the customs of culture as our values erode

Ex: Act one way at work but diff at home; most celebrities who cheated did so while away from home

Christians may be residents in this world, but we are citizens of heaven

that's our true home; that's what our hearts are longing for- that safe place awaiting us

OUTLINE:

(v. 14-17) The conduct of citizens away from home

(v. 18-21) The earthly mountain

(v. 22-24) The heavenly mountain

(v. 25-27) A warning while we wait

(v. 28-29) A comfort & a charge

The conduct of citizens away from home (v. 14-27)

¹⁴ Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.

.....notice it doesn't not say *achieve peace*

We may not be able to achieve peace with all, but we are called to pursue peace with all

You may not be able to achieve peace with everyone, but we have a mandate to be KNOWN for pursuing it

Q: *Do people know you for being peaceful, or argumentative, mean, bitter?????*

"Everyone"- not just the people you like; those you disagree with also (Republican, Democrat, even giants fans!)

I have to point out that often the people we need to apply this with most,
are those closest to us (spouse, kids, parents)

Romans 12:18 If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

I've discovered in my life that peace with others is fleeting; it requires nurturing

Jesus- **"blessed are the peaceMAKERS not peaceKEEPERS"**

"and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord"-....

I thought God declares us holy???? You are right young theologian, but.....

While we are declared holy in Christ, we are simultaneously directed to live holy through Christ

By grace God declares us holy and makes us holy; but our response is to **run with the flow, not against it**

■ imagine I married my wife, but I didn't move in with her and didn't tell her I loved her

Holiness is your standing positionally, now make it your striving practically

pursue holiness; 'pursue' Literally, in Greek- "persecute," or "hunt it down."

"You will never gain holiness by standing still. Nobody ever grew holy without agonizing to be holy. Sin will grow without sowing, but holiness needs cultivation.. Follow it; it will not run after you. You must pursue it with determination, with eagerness, with perseverance, as a hunter pursues its prey." Charles Spurgeon

Carve out time to read your bible, pray, to read Christian books, to listen to sermons and Christian music, worship with your kids, make it a habit to attend church and get involved, etc.

be fighting sin, be dying to self, be repenting when you fail, be chasing godliness

¹⁵ Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defiling many.

There's a danger in this verse- that MANY within the church would be defiled. *But what exactly is the danger?*

Someone fell short of the grace of God & a root of bitterness sprang up.... But *what does that mean?*

Bitterness isn't referring to a *feeling*, but a *person*-

Deuteronomy 29:18-19 Be sure there is no man, woman, clan, or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the Lord our God to go and worship the gods of those nations. Be sure there is no root among you bearing poisonous and bitter fruit. ¹⁹When someone hears the words of this oath, he may consider himself exempt, thinking, 'I will have peace even though I follow my own stubborn heart.'
This will lead to the destruction of the well-watered land as well as the dry land.

Here's what Hebrews 12:15 is saying-

some people disregard the Grace that can save them;

they're poisoned with unbelief against Jesus, and they may possibly poison others, so watch out.

We have to be support, protect and correct each other, because one spoiled fruit can spoil the batch

This verse isn't just about shunning those who have doubts or questions;

it's about doing our best to make sure *none of us* turn away from the Lord.....

and listen, the command is there because *any of us on our own* are prone to become poisoned

¹⁶ And make sure that there isn't any immoral or irreverent person like Esau, who sold his birthright in exchange for a single meal. ¹⁷For you know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, even though he sought it with tears, because he didn't find any opportunity for repentance.

✗ Genesis- older brother Esau came in from hunting, hungry; sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentils
Later on, their father was dying and Jacob tricked him into giving him the birthright instead of Esau

▲ Esau was willing to give up his long-term standing for short-term pleasure;

Pursuing short-term pleasure can have long-term circumstances that cannot be undone

We must be vigilant against immorality because it will blind our eternal perspective with short-term pleasure

Immorality can murder your soul by keeping it from thinking about eternity

So our conduct while we journey through this life is to:

pursue peace & holiness, look out for each other, and run from immorality

The earthly mountain (v.18-21)

¹⁸For you have not come to what could be touched, to a blazing fire, to darkness, gloom, and storm, ¹⁹to the blast of a trumpet, and the sound of words. Those who heard it begged that not another word be spoken to them, ²⁰for they could not bear what was commanded: **If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.** ²¹The appearance was so terrifying that Moses said, **I am trembling with fear.**

The author is describing a scene from **Exodus ch19-20**, as God was making a covenant with His people at Mt. Sinai

They knew their ultimate peace and prosperity (their HOME) was only found in God.

But there was a problem; they couldn't come near to God because of their sin and His holiness

The Old Covenant highlights our *sin* against the backdrop of God's holiness

(like tissue on a fire)

Though sadly many people do live this way, admiring God from a distance, the good news is we don't have to!

The heavenly mountain (v.22-24)

²²Instead, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God (the heavenly Jerusalem), to myriads of angels, a festive gathering, ²³to the assembly of the firstborn whose names have been written in heaven, to a Judge, who is God of all, to the spirits of righteous people made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which says better things than the blood of Abel.

How can the same terrifyingly holy God of Mt Sinai now welcomes us into what sounds like a party???

Read v.24 again- new covenant....blood that says better things?

In Genesis 4, the first murder takes place, Cain kills his brother Abel. God confronts Cain but He denies it.

God tells Cain that his brother's blood cries out to Him from the ground...what was it calling out?

Cain's blood demanded vengeance or at least justice

We murdered Jesus, but His blood cries out from the ground not for our vengeance, but for our forgiveness.

The New Covenant highlights our adoption against the backdrop of Jesus' sacrifice

This is an entirely different scene from the one at Mt Sinai- 'festive gathering'- but it's not uncommon in the bible.

Jesus' first miracle was at a party.

The Jews had festivals upon festivals that they were commanded to keep.

The bible ends with a wedding party between Christ and His church which He calls His bride.

God is a God of joy and festivity and closeness! That's what Mt Zion is all about.

v.23 spirits of righteous people made perfect'- Mt Sinai was a testament to our sinfulness,

Mt Zion is a celebration to our holiness in Christ

Mt Zion is a physical place that represents a heavenly place; it is where Jerusalem is built

Hebrew history is one of nomadic origins- wanderers and travelers seeking a home....*the promised land*.

Once they have it, Jerusalem is built on Mt Zion. This city meant safety and prosperity (in our culture peace and prosperity means moving to a secluded plot of land away from the city).

Throughout the Old Testament, all their hopes centered on “Jeru-salem,” or literally, “the city of peace.”

JD Grear writes, *“In a sense, the writer says, we are all searching for a city like that, aren’t we? We want safety; we want permanence; a place of fulfillment and prosperity. Isn’t that why you are working so hard to get the degree or to get the job; isn’t that why you are saving your money; trying to ensure your kids have all they need; isn’t that why you want to get married and have a family? You want a “city,” a Jeru-salem, a permanent place of peace.”*

We all long for home, for God; our sin had separated us, but Jesus’ sacrifice brings us near once more. Jesus is the way home.

Notice how His crucifixion is strangely similar to Mt. Sinai.

Jesus’ crucifixion occurred on top of a small mountain.

There was darkness all around. Rocks split and lightning and thunder flashed.

He was absorbing the judgment of a sinful people in the presence of a holy God.

Now when you and I approach God, we do so without fear, because anything that could ever make God reject me was put upon Jesus and He was rejected for me! He took my sin and I was given His righteousness

John Newton-ex slave trader:

Let us love and sing and wonder, let us praise the Savior’s name!

He has hushed the law’s loud thunder, he has quenched Mount Sinai’s flame:

he has washed us with his blood, he has brought us (near) to God.

As quickly as we are reminded of our heavenly home, we are reminded we’re not there yet-

A warning while we wait (v.25-27)

²⁵ See to it that you do not reject the one who speaks. For if they did not escape when they rejected him who warned them on earth, even less will we if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven. ²⁶ His voice shook the earth at that time, but now he has promised, **Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.** ²⁷ This expression, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what is not shaken might remain.

Imagine the scene from Mt Sinai... and then people asking God to keep it down or just ignoring Him...not logical.

God has spoken even louder through what Jesus has done for us...His life and suffering and sacrifice and disfigurement on the cross. You ignore that, what else is there for you??

- January 1986, a Nasa engineer warned Nasa not to launch because the O-rings which sealed the joints in the rocket boosters, were not certified for cold weather (it was a cold day); he was ignored and as a result 7 astronauts died in the explosion of the Challenger shuttle

Warning: Do not turn away from Jesus; not now, not ever

v.26-27 everything in this life will undergo shaking

JD Grear, *“Some of you, God is shaking you now: Your marriage is falling apart; your bank account just got rocked; your health is deteriorating... and it’s mercy. Because you have falsely trusted in these things and God is shaking them to show you that the only foundation that will survive the final shaking and the consuming fire is Jesus Christ! And if you use this chapter of difficulty in your life to re-establish your trust in Him then the darkest chapter of your life could become the turning point of your eternity.”*

If God is shaking you now, consider it His mercy as He's exposing your faulty foundation now before that final day

A comfort & a charge (v.28-29)

²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful.

It is a comfort to know that the kingdom awaiting us cannot be shaken-

In this life we toil to balance all things without them collapsing, not so in our heavenly home

Your security cannot be shaken; your mental health; your physical fortitude;

Your acceptance; your joy; your peace;

By it, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe, ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire.

God is a consuming fire

1 Corinthians 3:12-13 If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, ¹³each one's work will become obvious. For the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work.

If the Bible is true, then that final day is the most important one in your entire eternity.

Are you ready for it?

If you are, serve (worship) with reverence and awe.

“Worship is awe mixed with intimacy”

We long for home, we feel the aches of being away, but our hope is secure, and our work here is not yet finished-

MAIN POINT- Our conduct on earth should reflect our citizenship in heaven

Don't go wildin out just because we're saved by grace-

Philippians 1:27 ...As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ....

Give non-Christians something to wonder about!

Your life should at the very least make them curious about heaven

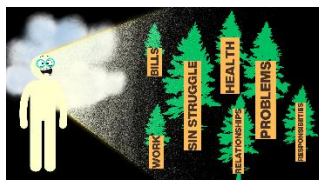
Challenge- View everything in your life, in light of eternity

Figure 1-



Work/ bills/ sin struggle/ relationships/
health/ problems/ responsibilities
obstructing our view

Figure 2-



Call to Action- Evangelism Workshop 12:45 in the social hall

BULPEN-

"Be killing sin or sin will be killing you"- John Owen

V16 "immorality"- lit Greek pornos; sexually immoral ; "irreverent" (godless)- grk *improper, unauthorized* entry

V14 Pursue: peace & holiness

V15-17 Avoid: falling short of grace, bitterness and immoral/irreverent people

V18-21 O.C. = fear and distance

V22-24 N.C. = festivity and closeness

V25 warning: don't reject

V26-28a unshakeable kingdom

V28b-29 reverence and awe

Believing is hard- their hope is invisible, persecution was severe; temptations are accurate and precise; they've got unanswered questions and unanswered prayers.

V28 cannot be shaken= secure

V28- serve (worship)- to render technical, *acceptable service* because specifically *qualified* (equipped)

Awe (fear)

Worship/service is awe mixed with intimacy

V14-17 Termites are the slow gradual danger.

For most of you, the danger to your faith is not some big, cataclysmic event where you lose your faith. It's the slow, gradual dulling of your heart toward God; you slowly lose your capacity for faith.

Termites in or lives:

Bitterness (V14-15) blessed are the peaceMAKERS not peaceKEEPERS

Worldliness (V14) pursue holiness; pursue. Literally, in Greek, it says "persecute," or "hunt it down."

"You will never gain holiness by standing still. Nobody ever grew holy without agonizing to be holy. Sin will grow without sowing, but holiness needs cultivation.. Follow it; it will not run after you. You must pursue it with determination, with eagerness, with perseverance, as a hunter pursues its prey." Charles Spurgeon

Carve out time to read your bible, pray, to read Christian books, to listen to sermons and Christian music, worship with your kids, etc.

Sensualness (16)

immorality- lit Greek pornos; sexually immoral

irreverent (godless)- grk *improper, unauthorized* entry

Immorality can murder your soul by keeping it from thinking about eternity

JC Ryle- *Once sin is allowed to settle in your heart, it will not be turned out at your bidding. Custom becomes second nature, and its chains are not easily broken. The prophet has well said, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil" (Jeremiah 13:23). Habits are like stones rolling down hill--the further they roll, the faster and more ungovernable is their course. Habits, like trees, are strengthened by age. A boy may bend an oak when it is a sapling--a hundred men cannot root it up, when it is a full grown tree. A child can wade over the Thames River at its fountain-head--the largest ship in the world can*

float in it when it gets near the sea. So it is with habits: the older the stronger--the longer they have held possession, the harder they will be to cast out.

JC Ryle *“God is serious in observing us—Christ is serious in His death for us—the Spirit is serious in striving with us—the truths of God are serious—our spiritual enemies are serious in their endeavors to ruin us—poor lost sinners are serious in hell—why then should we not be serious, too?”*

V14How do we pursue holiness/ sanctification if God is the one who makes us holy and sanctifies us???

Grace and godly effort are not opposed to one another.

By grace God declares us holy and makes us holy; but our response is to run with the flow, not against it

Exodus 19:16-21 ¹⁶On the third day, when morning came, there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud on the mountain, and a very loud blast from a ram’s horn, so that all the people in the camp shuddered. ¹⁷Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸Mount Sinai was completely enveloped in smoke because the Lord came down on it in fire. Its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. ¹⁹As the sound of the ram’s horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him in the thunder. ²⁰The Lord came down on Mount Sinai at the top of the mountain. Then the Lord summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and he went up. ²¹The Lord directed Moses, “Go down and warn the people not to break through to see the Lord; otherwise many of them will die.

Exodus 20:18-19 ¹⁸All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the ram’s horn, and the mountain surrounded by smoke. When the people saw it they trembled and stood at a distance. ¹⁹“You speak to us, and we will listen,” they said to Moses, “but don’t let God speak to us, or we will die.”

O.C. was about barriers- God is holy and you are not

(Hebrews 9:8 The Holy Spirit was making it clear that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed while the first tabernacle was still standing.)

Living with eternity in mind-

This was an exhausting week for Mel and I; birthdays, family issues, etc.

As I reflected on this text I pictured eternity before me, but a forest of this life in front obstructing the view- Tree of debt, tree of family problems, tree of responsibilities, tree of struggling against sin, tree of xyz

Daid Halla came and allowed me to vent, and as I did I felt the Lord teaching me :

Eternity is not what you see as you glance through the trees, eternity is the lens you see the tress by

V25 Hebrews 1:2

The warning again is to finish, to not fall away, to endure, to keep going

I know I’ve disregarded God’s grace when your sin bothers me more than mine

Shake the heavens and earth vs a kingdom that cannot be shaken

What have you built? And What have you built it on?

Are we asking of our careers, our families, our wealth, our savings, our things, our achievements, are we asking of them to be our peace and security???

What happens when the shaking comes? The shaking of the market crashing or a recession that takes your savings, your house, your car; the shaking of health that takes your vitality, strength, comfort; the shaking of relationships and you’re betrayed or neglected or hurt by

those who were supposed to be your shelter; and the ultimate shaking, the shaking of death, Luke 12:19-20.

Unless Jesus is the foundation, whatever we've built will fall with a great crash