

- ***READ Deuteronomy 30:11-20*** The Book of Deuteronomy is a writing that contains a series of sermons that Moses spoke to the people of Israel as they were making preparations to enter into the promised land of Canaan. In chapter 29, Moses seeks to renew the passion for God's Law within the hearts of the people, and in chapter 30 he lays down the two choices that lay before them. There was a way which led to curses and a way which led to blessings. It would be just after this final admonition from Moses to the people that Joshua would take his place as the leader of Israel in chapter 31.
 - This message spoken from Moses to the people of Israel in chapter 30 is a message that ought to truly resonate with us even until today. Consider the following similarities between the situation that these people were in and the situation we find ourselves in as Christians.
 - These were the chosen people of God as we are the chosen people of God.
 - They were a covenant people of God just as we are a covenant people of God.
 - They were striving to enter a land of rest just as we are striving to enter a land of rest.
 - And yet, they are admonished to continue to remain faithful to God through it all. *"I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, love the Lord your God, obey him, and remain faithful to him. For he is your life, and he will prolong your days as you live in the land the Lord swore to give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."* (Deuteronomy 30:19,20)
 - These words of Moses continue to echo even unto our day as we are living as the people of God in Christ. Although we have been forgiven of our sins and have been given the Holy Spirit as a seal that signifies us as heirs of a great eternal promise...we must remember these words of Moses and make sure that we continue to love the Lord our God, obey Him, and remain faithful to Him. This evening, we are going to build upon our lesson from this morning by talking about the serious nature of remaining faithful to God as Christians. It can be easy for us to be forgiven of our sins at the point of obedience to the Gospel and then become comfortable and think that we no longer need to give effort towards holy and righteous living. This could not be further from the truth and we will consider how this is the case from Scripture over the next few minutes as we seek to answer the question, "Can We Fall Short?"
- I. Our ability to choose to submit or to reject God extends into our walk with God. We can choose to renew our arrogance & live once again for self.**
- A. Some would argue that our forgiveness in Jesus extends even to what we do after we are saved.**
1. You might have seen within the past couple of months a quotation from the most recent star of the TV show "The Bachelorette", Hannah B, who had an interview concerning a particular conversation that happened during the airing of the show. The interview took place because a contestant expressed his belief that the sexual relationship should be confined to marriage.
 2. In an outside interview Hannah B stated, *"Regardless of anything that I've done, I can do whatever, I sin daily and Jesus still loves me. It's all washed and if the Lord doesn't judge me and it's all forgiven, then no other man, woman ... anything can judge me,"* Her obvious belief is that her receiving the grace of Jesus allows her to go on living however she wants to, but surely we recognize this simply isn't the case. The Bible is clear that this thinking is false.
 3. Paul states plainly in **Romans 6:1-11**, in response to a similar thought that more sinning would just result in more grace, that those who have died to sin ought not to still live in it. *"Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life... So, you too consider yourselves **dead to sin** and alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

B. Others would argue that if someone falls away then it is a sign that they were never truly saved to begin with.

1. Joshua Harris, who was a well known evangelical pastor and author of the book, *"I Kissed Dating Goodbye"* recently came out as having divorced his wife and renouncing his faith all together. For many, this was a major issue because they thought that if a pastor couldn't keep his faith until the end then how could the average person. And where was the Holy Spirit in all of this anyways? Isn't God supposed to help His people persevere until the end?
2. One particular radio show tried to soothe the fears of the masses by declaring that Harris's leaving of his faith was only a clear sign that he was never truly saved to begin with. This radio host cited **I John 2:18,19** as proof of this thinking. The text does speak of those who ended up being against Christ coming out from among disciples, but I don't believe it is saying that those who go out from among Christians into the world are people who were never Christians. It seems to me that John is stating that they are showing themselves as not belonging among disciples because they were not living as Christ would have them to live.
3. Further, there are texts that clearly show that legitimately believing Christians can decide to give up their faith and go back into the world. Just because one falls away does not necessary mean that he was never saved. The Bible clearly shows that true believers can fall away.
 - *"For it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift, who shared in the Holy Spirit, who tasted God's good word and the powers of the coming age, and who have fallen away. This is because, to their own harm, they are recrucifying the Son of God and holding him up to contempt." (Hebrews 6:4-6)*
 - *"For if we deliberately go on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire about to consume the adversaries." (Hebrews 10:26,27)*
 - *"For if, having escaped the world's impurity through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in these things and defeated, the last state is worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy command delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to its own vomit, and, "A washed sow returns to wallowing in the mud." (II Peter 2:20-22)*

II. Consider Paul's Example Of Israel (I Corinthians 10:1-13):

A. Some of Israel failed to enter into the promised land because of their rebellion against God. (vv.1-10)

1. Following Paul's teachings on striving for endurance in his own faith (**I Corinthians 9:24-27**), he gives the history of Israel as an example and illustration of what it looks like when God's people fail to endure. He begins by recognizing what we recognized earlier from Deuteronomy 30 concerning the similarities between Israel at that point of time and where we now find ourselves as the people of God in Christ.
2. These people were "baptized" into Moses through the Red Sea. They were given spiritual food to eat and spiritual food to drink. Paul even states that these Jewish ancestors drank from the spiritual rock of Jesus! These people were walking in the same shoes as even we are. And yet sadly, God wasn't pleased with them because of their sin. They never made it to the promised land because God struck them down in the wilderness.
3. Paul states that their sins are preserved for us in Scripture so that we might look to them as bad examples not to follow. The idolaters were struck down. The sexually immoral were struck down. The testers were struck down. The complainers were struck down. All of those who were of the people of God who decided to rebel against God were struck down. Again, *"Now these things took place as examples for us, so that we will not desire evil things as they did."*

- B. Paul warns the Corinthians to not fall into the same trap of arrogant sinfulness. (vv.11,12)
1. Their desiring and pursuing of evil things led them into sin which eventually led them to condemnation and death. *“These things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the ages have come. So, whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall.”*
 2. It is not difficult for us to understand Paul’s point that he is trying to get across. He is writing to Christians and these Christians were engaged in all sorts of immorality, some of which were even similar to what was taking place within Corinth. As Paul is writing this letter to chastise and admonish them for their poor behavior, he wants them to recognize that they were in danger of following the exact same patten of behavior that caused for those of Israel to be cut down in the wilderness. They needed to check themselves before they too fell before God.
- C. Satan will continue to tempt us, but God will offer a way of escape that must be heeded. (v.13)
1. This mean that Paul recognized that there would be continued temptations within the lives of these disciples. Satan would continue to have them under attack, but it was God who would strengthen them to over come. *“No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide a way out so that you may be able to bear it.”*
 2. Paul’s point is one of encouragement. He wants for these disciples to recognize that they are simply going through wha all of the faithful go through. Satan wants for all of God’s people to fall short of a life finished in faith, but God isn’t going to sit by and idly watch that happen. God will strengthen us and provide us a way of escape from whatever temptation we might come up against. There will never be a time when we must give into temptation for God, in His power, will strengthen us to bear it. We can endure and be better than those in Israel who fell short.

III. Numerous warnings continue throughout the New Testament letters concerning the need for Christians to be on guard against falling away from faith.

- A. For the sake of time and to coincide with our daily Bible reading, simply consider these verses that are all found only within the letter that was written to the Hebrews.
1. *“For this reason, we must pay attention all the more to what we have heard, **so that we will not drift away.** For if the message spoken through angels was legally binding and every transgression and disobedience received a just punishment, how will we escape **if we neglect such a great salvation?** This salvation had its beginning when it was spoken of by the Lord, and it was confirmed to us by those who heard him. At the same time, God also testified by signs and wonders, various miracles, and distributions of gifts from the Holy Spirit according to his will.” (Hebrews 2:1-4)*
 2. *“**Watch out, brothers and sisters, so that there won’t be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.** But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, **so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.** For we have become participants in Christ **if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start.** As it is said: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. For who heard and rebelled? Wasn’t it all who came out of Egypt under Moses? With whom was God angry for forty years? Wasn’t it with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, if not to those who disobeyed? **So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.**” (Hebrews 3:12-19)*
 3. *“Therefore, since the promise to enter his rest remains, let us beware[a] that none of you be found to have **fallen short.**” (Hebrews 4:1)*

4. "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens—Jesus the Son of God—**let us hold fast to our confession**. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16)
 5. "For it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift, who shared in the Holy Spirit, who tasted God's good word and the powers of the coming age, and **who have fallen away**. This is because, to their own harm, they are recrucifying the Son of God and holding him up to contempt." (Hebrews 6:4-6)
 6. "**Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering**, since he who promised is faithful. And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching. For **if we deliberately go on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins**, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire about to consume the adversaries." (Hebrews 10:23-27)
 7. "So don't throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. **For you need endurance**, so that after you have done God's will, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith; and if he draws back, I have no pleasure in him. But **we are not those who draw back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and are saved**." (Hebrews 10:35-39)
 8. "Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. **Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us**, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you won't grow weary and give up." (Hebrews 12:1-3)
 9. "Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord. **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**. And make sure that there isn't any immoral or irreverent person like Esau, who sold his birthright in exchange for a single meal. For 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." (Hebrews 12:14-17)
- B. It seems abundantly clear that those who have humbly submitted themselves to Jesus in faith and obedience need to continue to live in that same matter. The writer of Hebrews makes it obvious that our refusal to continue to walk in faith will only lead to us falling short of God's promise of eternal life with Him. Lest one thinks this is a one time subject addressed only in Hebrews, I would encourage you to consider the rest of the New Testament letters because continuity on this subject is found throughout.

While some would look at the things we have considered this evening and think that we are speaking of working our way to heaven...let's remind ourselves that we are nothing without God. Let's remember that time and time again throughout those texts that the admonition is for us to remember the grace of God and the strength that He provides in order for us to make it until the end. Not a one of us will endure on our own without God's mercy and strength. May we therefore remember that the work has only just begun within us, and may our Lord strengthen us as we strive throughout this week to continue the good work of faith within and throughout our lives. We can fall short, but with God's help we will not.