

The Pursuit of Holiness (Part 12)

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[0:00] I'll be opening your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 12.

Hebrews chapter 12, I'm going to go ahead and read part of the text from last time, and then adding to it a couple of verses that will be our focus tonight.

Hebrews 12, starting with verse 18, For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched, and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged with a word, that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.

For they could not endure what was commanded. And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned, or shot with an arrow. That's in quotation marks, that's what was commanded.

They couldn't bear it. And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I am exceedingly afraid and trembling. And you know, if Moses was, then you can imagine what the rest of the people were like.

[1:28] But, verse 22, and this will be our focus tonight. But, to the general assembly, that is, you have come to, borrowing what was said in verse 18, But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God, the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Now, those three verses, those last three verses that I read, were just going to kind of scratch the surface of tonight, and I promise you, unless Jesus comes first, and I promise you also, unless I just don't make it, but next week we'll, when is the Awana Award?

That's not, it's three weeks, isn't it? Okay. As soon as I said that, I thought, that's not next week.

That's not next week. Anyway, we'll wrap up, I feel confident, wrap up Hebrews 12 next week, okay?

Okay. Now, the last couple of Wednesdays, or our time together on Wednesday, we looked at the works that fail us. Now, point number two, in this kind of, this block of verses toward the end of the chapter, point number two is the way that frees us.

The way that frees us. Now, before we really get into that, let me just say by way of review, let's understand something here, just in case you've misunderstood me, last couple of weeks, because I've been focusing, or taking the text there, and focusing on it, or applying it to unbelievers.

[3:38] We do need to be reminded, that Paul was writing here, in this chapter, throughout this chapter, Paul is speaking to believers. Alright, we need to, I need to mention this, and that's going to make sense, if we go along here.

Let's be reminded, that Paul is speaking to believers, in this text, though I really think, that verses 18 and following, can be applied, I think, legitimately, to unbelievers.

Paul says, you have not come, to Mount Sinai, but the fact of the matter, is many have. Many have. And so that's why I applied it in that way.

But Paul is speaking to believers, and he's speaking to believers, who are dealing, with many of the same kind of stresses, and sins, and difficulties, and temptations, and trials, that many believers today, experience, nearly every day.

And he's writing then, to believers, who need to be encouraged. That's the whole point, of this chapter. Well, that's not the point. The point is, the pursuit of holiness.

[4:55] But he is speaking, encouraging words, moving them toward, this pursuit of holiness. And so these believers, in Paul's day, believers today, need these words of encouragement, to kind of push us forward, in our Christian growth.

And so, kind of by way of a review, he's writing to believers, who need to run the race, with endurance. Alright? We've already covered that. Believers who, need to lay aside, whatever might threaten, to hinder them in that race.

In that journey. And to keep them from, running, you know, some things that might keep them, from running the race, itself. To those who need, to look to Jesus.

Look unto Jesus. That is, keep your life's focus, upon Him. Paul's writing to people like that. People today, need the same message. Believers, I mean. And also to those, who need to, not despise, or, faint under, the loving discipline, of a loving Father.

And for this purpose, that they might, be partakers, of His holiness. And he's writing to those, who need to, to encourage, those of us, right here in this room. Who need to, be involved, in encouraging, and helping those, that are around us.

[6 : 12] And, encouraging them, helping them, in their personal, personal pursuit of holiness. It's not a, it's not every man for himself, or woman for herself, kind of proposition, when it comes to, the body of Christ.

We're to help one another, to lift up the hands, that are hanging down, and to, the knees that are feeble, and to see to it, that, no one within that, that, kind of fellowship, or that assembly, no one fails, to get God's grace.

And so, he's been writing, to believers, kind of laying, all these points out, for us. And all of it, pertains, in some way, to our pursuit, of holiness.

Now, in these verses, I just read, Paul covers, an issue, that can, endanger, not only the verses, I read, or what we're going to focus on, but for the last, several weeks, those verses, that we've been looking at, Paul is dealing, primarily, with an issue, that can, endanger, our pursuit of holiness. It can, endanger it. And he, illustrates, this danger, again, just, this is just to remind us, where we're at, in case you haven't been here, too, in the last couple of weeks.

[7 : 25] He, illustrates this danger, with a contrast. And what is he contrasting? Remember, again, he contrasts, the spiritual significance, of two mountains.

That's what we need to understand, from this text, we need to see that very clearly. Contrast between two mountains, in history. But now, what he's pointing to, is the spiritual significance, of these two mountains.

Mount Sinai, Mount Zion. Mount Sinai, where the law was given, where the old covenant, was established. Mount Zion, where, initially, of course, Mount Zion, the whole idea of Mount Zion, goes way beyond, even, even this world.

Mount Zion, is ultimately a reference, to the new Jerusalem. But, in this sense, in which he is, giving it to us, and he's going to expand upon it, Mount Zion, represents where Jesus, was crucified.

Where the new covenant, was established. And so, Mount Sinai, represents the law, or, works of righteousness, and many are running, that direction. And, Mount Zion, then represents, grace.

[8 : 33] Represents grace, or, the righteousness of Christ. Or, it means, you're trusting, in the finished work, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the danger comes, in running to the wrong mountain. Alright, now I think you get that, don't you? Now, we've been looking, though, at how unbelievers, have, run to the wrong mountain.

That is, Mount Sinai. Believing that, works of righteousness, will save. But now, tonight, and again, Paul's primarily speaking, to believers.

Tonight, believers, we need to understand, this is B on your outline, believers can also, run to the wrong mountain. It's very important, for us to understand.

Believers, can also run, to the wrong mountain. Did you know, that one of the many dangers, that threatens, every born again believer, the health, the spiritual health, and well being, of the unbeliever, in their spiritual growth, the, the, the, the, the, main danger, in our pursuit of holiness, is, that after having come, to Mount Zion, that is, after having come, to salvation, by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ, we then, return, to Mount Sinai, we then, start looking, that way, that is, put it in other words, to believe, I'm saved by grace, but I stay saved, by works.

[10 : 08] Believers, can succumb, to that way of thinking, and it's wrong thinking. You say, well that's probably, a sign, that they're not saved, to begin with. Well, not necessarily. When you were saved, did you understand, everything about theology?

No, you didn't. And you know, hopefully know, more now, than you did, when you were, when you first believed. And there are believers, who, have wrong thinking, or wrong, sets of belief, about,

God's work, ongoing work, of grace.

But even those of us, who know better, can succumb, to the idea, now, you know, we would reject it, if anybody suggested, that we believe this, but, and yet our actions, speak louder, than our words.

That somehow, you know, I'm saved by grace, but I stay saved, by works. Or put it, maybe in a more, more applicable way, to the way, we sometimes think, to believe, that God's love, for me, is dependent, upon how successful, I am, at obeying his word.

That somehow, my obeying God's word, is for this purpose, so that God will love me. So that God will favor me. When works of righteousness, contribute nothing, to your salvation, and I guarantee you, works of righteousness, will contribute nothing, to God's continuing love, for you, and his relationship, of grace with you.

[11 : 41] But we, tend to think that, and when we do, we're running, back to Mount Sinai, is the problem. And so, see, on your outline, a believer, can choose, to live, either in the liberty of grace, or, in the legalism, of the law.

And it's the difference, between running, to Mount Zion, or Mount Sinai. D, we need to understand, that our flesh, always wants to run back, to Sinai.

Very nature of the flesh, to want, to run back to Sinai. That is, to rely upon, the works of righteousness.

That's the nature of our flesh. Now, if that's you, then I have one word, that describes you. Are you ready? Fool.

Fool. Fool. Now, before you get mad at me, I want you to know, I don't just go around, telling people they're fools.

[12 : 57] Alright. What I'm doing, is just using the word, the Bible uses. The word the Bible uses, to describe those, who, you know, after having, been freed, by grace, from the bondage, and condemnation, of the law, who have now, returned again, to the slavery, to the law.

And, Paul called them fools. Where did he call them fools? Well, in Galatians. I mean, you, you, if you've studied Galatians, you know that, that was, Paul's main theme there.

Not, not that they were fools. The theme was, this idea, of works of righteousness, or returning to the law. And, you know, he dealt extensively, with this problem, in the letter, and he called the Galatians fools.

He said, you foolish Galatians. And, you know, you remember, again, the Galatians, had, had fallen prey, to a group of people, that had, infiltrated the church.

And, not just the church of Galatia, but, other early churches, in the early days of Christianity, they were called the Judaizers. And, just to give a short explanation, they were, they were those who were in the church, called themselves Christians, but they claimed that in order to be a Christian, you had to be a good Jew.

[14 : 24] That is, you had to, you know, you had to live according to the old covenant, and if you didn't, then you were not saved, not really saved. And, like circumcision, you know, if you weren't circumcised, you weren't a Christian.

If you didn't obey, and follow the, the old covenant, ceremonial laws, and sacrificial laws, and so forth, then you, you were not a Christian.

So, really, what they were doing, was, suggesting, that the only way, that you can keep your salvation, to be saved, is, is by obedience, to God's law.

They called it Judaism. And, Paul dealt with that, and the Galatians, had, you know, struggled with it. And, really, you could say, that they failed to see, something very important, something that many Christians today, fail to see.

And, what is that? that everyone comes to salvation, and lives out that salvation, by grace, through faith, and not by works of the law. It's not just, that we're saved by grace, through faith in Christ alone.

[15 : 35] We continue, to live, according to grace, and faith. Galatians, let me just read, that to you. See what Paul said here.

Galatians chapter 3, verse 1. He said, oh, foolish Galatians. See, I wasn't kidding. That's why I use the word fool. Take it up with the Bible. Foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, through whose eyes, Jesus Christ, was clearly portrayed, among you as crucified.

This only I want to learn from you. This is what I want to know. Did you receive the Spirit? That is, did you become saved, by the works of the law? Or by the hearing of faith?

Are you so foolish? He uses the word again. Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? And, you know, Paul could write today, you foolish Baptists.

You know, what's the matter with you? You foolish Highland Park people. See, I'm not blame, I'm not trying to project, some kind of condemnation toward you. I struggle with that too.

[16:46] And, I don't know, you know, there's many junctures of life. God brings me, and I'm sure He's brought you to a place where He readjusts, you know, you kind of relearn what grace is all about in your life.

And, and how God reveals to you that you, you know, you've turned from outside, you're going to Sinai again. You know. So, this is what Paul says, you're just a fool.

He, just as the law has no power to save you. We covered this last week and the week before.

The law has no power to save you. Remember I used that illustration of the plumb line? Plumb line can show you a crooked wall, but can't make a crooked wall straight.

The law has no power to save you. But just as the law has no power to save you, the law also has no power to make you holy. And so, the pursuit of holiness does not come through works of righteousness.

[17:58] It comes through an intimacy with Christ through faith. Through faith. Without faith, it's impossible to please God. So, where does the law come in?

F, is the liberty of grace a liberty to disobey God's law? Certainly not. You know the answer to that. Because you see, up to this point, you might be thinking, well, you mean obeying the law just is not a good thing?

There's no reason why I should do that? Or, does that not mean anything with God? Of course He wants you to obey His law. The liberty of grace is not a liberty to sin or to disobey God's law.

Grace, rather, frees us, not only frees us from the condemnation of the law, grace frees us to obey the law.

In a way, you could not obey it before. But to obey not out of fear, but out of love.

[19:11] Good guess. Not a guess. You knew that. I hate that. Of course. See, apart from God's saving grace and a relationship with Him that's based upon His grace, ongoing, we could obey the law to a point.

But we would be doing it out of fear or we would be doing it out of self-effort, but we would not be doing it out of love, not in a way that counts with God. It's grace that frees us to do that.

To obey God's law out of love. And to add to that, it frees us not to obey the law not in the power of the flesh, but in the liberating power of the Spirit.

You know, when a criminal serves his time and eventually gets out of prison, that man's not free now to just go out and do anything he feels like doing.

But he is free to obey the law. Have you ever thought of it in these terms? I mean, he's in prison, of course, you know, he's captive and he's told what to do, when to do it, and all those things.

[20:29] And all the laws of the land are out there, but he doesn't need to obey them. You know, because he's not out there. But when he gets out, after being freed from his bondage, he's not now free to just do whatever he wants or he's going to end up back in there.

What he's free to do now is to obey the law. Now, same is true of a Christian. Or similarly, when we are freed from sin by trusting in Christ, we're not given a freedom to go sin, a license to sin.

In reality, we are set free to obey God's law. To obey it in a way that we have never obeyed it before. We're to obey it in love, in joy, and in faith.

And so, you know, if you're tempted to gain God's favor through works of righteousness, then, you're a fool. You're a fool, according to Paul's words.

What are you doing? You're trusting in works that fail. They will fail you. Because you have not, you have not come to that mount.

[21:44] that is Sinai. And if you have come by way of Mount Zion, the way of grace, then you have come the way that frees. That frees.

And frees you from the condemnation of the law, yes, but also frees you to obey the law like never before. Frees you ultimately to be all God wants you to be.

There's tremendous freedom that grace affords us. works that fail us, we've looked at that. The way that frees us. And, though we have a little time, I'm going to go ahead and quit here because I want

to spend a good amount of time on the last point.
And you can jot it down if you want, but it's the word that forewarns us.