

## Thought for Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

### Hebrews 4:1-16

As we saw last Sunday, the Israelites who God, through Moses, delivered out of captivity in Egypt, never entered the Promised Land, because having seen the miracles God performed to release them, turned their backs on God. Hebrews chapter 3 ends; *'We see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.'* But chapter 4 begins; *'Since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short.'* We have a choice, we have freewill, and sadly there will be those who turn their backs on the God who offers them free Salvation. Grace, God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Christians accept it, but there are many who turn their backs on Christ. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that we may have forgiveness of sin and everlasting life by believing in Him. The writer to the Hebrews continues to use scripture to get his point across. He quotes scripture and then in verse 4 says; *'somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day.'* The writer cannot quote which book of the Old Testament it comes from, but he knows it is there somewhere. If you come to my office you will see a couple of concordances and several commentaries of the bible, and I need them because there are times when I echo the words of this writer, *'somewhere it says...'* with 1,250 pages in my bible, there are only a few who can always quote chapter and verse without a concordance, and so we need these helps. What we do see here is the writer quoting the Psalms, and in fact reiterating the words of Psalm 95 which we looked at last week, and they are words we need to heed; *'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.'* Or, do not be tempted to drift away from your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many people hear the words of Jesus in the bible, they even make a declaration of their faith, and then the world comes along and their faith fades. When I was pastor of Copthorne Chapel we had a Sunday school and a youth club. Then as the young people grew up, there was football on a Sunday morning, other things took over and the young people drifted away, lured away by the things of this world. I understand that it is not easy to keep children interested but if you have had personal relationship with Jesus, I struggle to understand what could draw you away from your eternal rest. Verse 2 says; *'we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.'* We come back to the words of Jesus to Thomas in John 20:29; *'because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'* Yet I know people who, I believe, have had a personal relationship with Jesus and have let their faith lapse. One thing I have become aware of is, that a lot of personalities in the U.S.A. are happy to say they have faith in God. Now I do have to stress that I am not certain how strong their faith is, whereas celebrities in the UK don't have that same faith, and if they do it is kept away from their public lives. I said it a couple of weeks ago and repeat it now, we should live as Paul says in his letter to the Romans 1:16; *'I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes:'* we must be prepared to stand up for our faith, by doing that will we encourage other to want to know what we are putting our faith in. 1 Peter 3:15 *'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,'* We have to, in fact we must be prepared to give the reason for our hope. If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, then you must be prepared to say why you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. God knew those Israelites who had refused to enter the Promised Land, only two, Joshua and Caleb made it to the Promise Land, not even Moses, read **Numbers 13:16-33**... I love verse 23; *'When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs.'* Could you imagine a single cluster of grapes being carried on a pole between them, the grapes weren't like I get in the supermarket. When God says he is going to give you the best, you better believe him. No wonder when Jesus was on the cross he turned to the repentant thief; *'today you will be with me in Paradise.'* In fact Moses gave this report to the Israelites v27; *'We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit.'* When God is with you, who can be against you? When will this faithless society recognise that God loves us? We have just read in verses 31-33 that some of the people rebelled against Moses, and all the people paid the price, including Moses, only

Joshua and Caleb were spared and entered the Promised Land. What is your salvation worth? Hebrews 4:11; *'Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.'* We must be aware of the words of verse 13; *'Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.'* If we strive to live our lives in the footsteps of Jesus, then I believe we can do as verse 16 says; *'Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.'* In two weeks time I will be looking at this subject again. My N.I.V. bible heads up Hebrews 5:11 with the following warning, *'Warning against falling away.'* So let's keep our eyes firmly fixed on our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Next Sunday is Pentecost, so we will be taking a break from our look at Hebrews for one week.

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven to earth come down!  
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,  
All Thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,  
Pure unbounded love Thou art;  
Visit us with Thy salvation,  
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit  
Into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in Thee inherit,  
Let us find Thy promised rest.  
Take away the love of sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
End of faith, as its beginning,  
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,  
Let us all Thy grace receive;  
Suddenly return, and never,  
Never more Thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,  
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then Thy new creation,  
Pure and spotless let us be;  
Let us see Thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in Thee!  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place;  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
Lost in wonder, love and praise.