

How to Rebuild Your Life

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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What a fresh reminder to each and every one of us and what the Scripture says that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, not at the name of an organization, not at the name of an entity, a sovereign state or anything of earth, it is at the name of Jesus that everyone will bow and confess.

You know, each and every day even in these days that we've been walking through as a community, we're bombarded by individuals who tell us that we need to bow our knee and confess our tongue to somebody or something other than Jesus and yet on that day, and by the way, that day's coming for you and that day's coming for me, there's going to be a day when we stand before an Almighty, all-powerful and all-merciful God, and there's only one name, there's only one name and that is Jesus Christ. We gather in his name this day and all days.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we continue our time to worship, thank you for a very vivid, fresh reminder that you are a light and in you is no darkness at all. Lord, we know that the enemy according to Ephesians 6 is not made of flesh and blood but principalities and powers and rulers of darkness, and Lord, we know that his agenda is to invade our lives with darkness but we know that you are light and in you is no darkness at all. So God, we pray before we even open up your word, that all ideas and hints and anything of darkness would be dismissed from our lives and that your glorious light would be all that we focus our lives on this day. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews 4. As you're turning to Hebrews 4, I know we have a lot of first-time guests with us today, but whether you're here for the very first time or maybe you're a seasoned veteran here at First Baptist, Opelika, I want to encourage each and every one of you to either continue to be a part of or maybe begin the journey with us this day as we as a family of faith are simply walking through the Scriptures of basically a chapter, maybe two chapters a day over the course of about three years. The goal and the purpose of this isn't just to be able to check off a box and say, "I read the Bible from cover to cover," but the purpose is to do what 2 Timothy 2 says, to study the word of God, to allow it to kind of soak into our

lives. Those of you that have been a part of our plan this last few days know that at this section in the book of Hebrews, we didn't read a chapter a day, we didn't a couple or even two, but some days we read just a portion of a specific chapter because there is so much there, there is so much what we might call meat in there according to chapter 5 of Hebrews, that it's good for us to just kind of sink our teeth into and see what the Lord has for us.

But as you walk through the book of Hebrews, the tone is kind of set with the very first verse. It says, "God who in sundry times and diverse manners, he spoke unto us in times past by the prophets but now he speaks unto us by his Son Jesus Christ." And that's kind of the theme of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus is better than whomever or whatever you want to put in the blank. Now specifically in the book of Hebrews, we discover Jesus is better than the prophets. We discover that Jesus is better than the priests. Jesus is better than Moses. Jesus is better than the tabernacle. There is nothing that we can put in that proverbial blank of life that somehow can supersede who Jesus Christ should be in our lives.

That being said, as we come to the latter portion of chapter 4 of the book of Hebrews, with all that information and with all that coming at us, there's almost kind of a pause and a break for some not only self-reflection but for some real life application here. How do we take this information? How do we take this knowledge? How do we take this reality that nothing can compare to Jesus, nothing can supersede Jesus? How do we make that practical and real in our lives? Chapter 4 of the book of Hebrews, beginning in verse 9, it says,

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. 11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. 14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Today as we kind of peel away the layers of this passage, I want to address a subject matter that is not just specific to our community in these days, the concept of how do we rebuild a life. These last few days, it has been very apparent to each and every one of us of how fragile life is, how small we truly are in the bigger picture of things, and people are trying to put back the pieces of their homes, they're trying to put back the pieces to

their business and their lives, and yet we need to understand today that each and every one of us no matter where we live in this geographic location or others, it doesn't matter what our point of origin is, what our primary language is, what the color on the outside is, all of us are in a position where we need the Lord to rebuild our lives this day, the question is how do we do that? How do we allow the Lord to do so?

There are a couple of things from this passage. I think the first thing is this: we need to have a proper perspective. I want you to notice the first few verses that we read. They don't happen in isolation. It's not like we can take this last half of chapter 4 and somehow just remove it in and of itself. There is this case being built for who Jesus is in our life, or should be in our life, but at the end of chapter 3, there is this reference back there, this allusion to what we know as the exodus experience, and notice what it says in verse 11. We need to labor, we need to be expedient, therefore, to enter into his rest, to trust him lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. And when I say that we need a proper perspective, you look back at that experience when the Israelites came out of Egypt and I think we all naturally gravitate toward erroneous positions. Somehow, why is it we think that if we'd of been there, we'd have done it better? But we all fall into that trap, do we not? Here are the Israelites for 400 years enslaved by the Egyptians, for 400 years the taskmasters were not only of another origin and another language, but the labor was rough and the attitude was worse, but the Lord through his provision through specifically Moses and Aaron, came and in a supernatural miraculous way delivered them. Whether it was the water turning to blood, the lice, the locusts, the darkness, or the death of the firstborn, there came that moment where they were allowed to go out of Egypt, they went across the Red Sea and they landed on the other side. Technically speaking, they were 11 days away from the Promised land. They didn't make it, did they? Those that were of age, according to the book of Numbers 14, those that were probably 20 years of age and older that should have known better, they died in the wilderness. Why? Because of their, as it says in verse 11, because of their unbelief.

You see, they had the wrong perspective. They thought that they had an innate ability, they thought somehow, some way they knew better than God did. Remember what they said to Moses? They said, "We had it better in Egypt." Well, that's funny, even though they woke up in the wilderness, even though Krispy Kreme donuts came miraculously out of heaven every day, even though they experienced that, they weren't slaves anymore. They weren't taskmasters anymore. They actually were possessing freedom.

Now lest we give them too difficult of a time, I want you to think about something. Did you know that every person who crossed the Red Sea, not one of them knew anybody who ever knew anybody who ever knew anybody that had been free. Nobody. Nobody could sit down and say, "Hey, when we get to the other side, this is what it's gonna be like." Every one of them had the wrong perspective. They thought it was up to what they could do, what they could achieve. "Moses, why did you bring us here to die?"

Can I give you the proper perspective today? Whether you understand or believe it or not, you and I inherently both physically and spiritually, we are the problem. The problem is not God. The problem is us. We are bent toward rebellion. We are bent toward sin. It

doesn't matter how hard we try because the problem is the spies went into the land and 10 of them came back and said, "Man, they're huge. There's no way we can conquer this." Our natural sinful disposition is to go against our Creator and to think we know what we're doing, and time after time, particularly in Scripture whether you're in the garden of Eden, whether you're in the exodus experience which is alluded to here, or whether it's you in your life and you woke up this morning, time and time again it is proven and shown and demonstrated that we need a proper perspective. What humanity has, what we have, what you have, what I have, is we've got a sin problem and it's about time we called it what it is.

You know, everybody wants to talk about, "Well, it's this and it's that," I've got the thing for you, it's sin. That's why we've got such a mess in this world. The reason there is so much mess, the wages of sin is death. The reason that we have heartache, the reason we have struggles, the reason we have the emotions that we do, is because we are a sinful people bent on sinful behavior. We need a proper perspective. We can blame this, we can blame that, but I've got news, do you know who you can blame? Go look in the mirror, that's who you can blame. The proper perspective is that we're no different than the Israelites in the wilderness. We don't believe that God really knows what he's doing. We don't really believe that he can do what he claimed to do and so we go out in our own endeavors and what does that get us? Forty years of walking around the desert and death therein.

So we need a proper perspective and once we get the proper perspective, we'll discover according to verse 12, that we have access to a proper power, and I'll explain why I use that word in just a moment. It says, "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and the marrow, as a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Notice that description of what we know as the Scriptures, the word of God, the Bible. It is quick. It is powerful and it is sharper than any twoedged sword and biblically speaking, when that word "power, powerful" is used, whether it's in this context or 1 Corinthians 1:18 where it says that the preaching of the Gospel is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to those of us who are saved, it is the power of God, our modern-day contemporary illustration is of dynamite or TNT which has the capacity – hear this – to take an obstruction which in our own endeavors we cannot remove, in our own abilities we are incapacitated, is able to with a push of a button, able to remove that obstruction so that a clearing and path may become available. It says that the word of God is that in our life and we talk about this proper perspective of we're the problem and that Jesus is the answer, we need to understand that the proper power, the proper way to remove those obstructions of life is to do it the way he told us to.

Notice it says it's quick and it's sharper. I've made this confession to many of you before and I'll go ahead and share it again. One of my sons, I won't tell you who he is but he has two older brothers, one of my sons and I, we have something that we enjoy doing together, we like watching this reality show called "Forged in Fire." If you're not familiar

with it, it's a reality show where they bring craftsmen and blacksmiths in and they give them a raw piece of metal or a raw piece of something and say, "Make a sword. Make a blade. Make a knife out of it." And I don't know why we enjoy it, I guess it's just, you know, we're just guys kinda hanging out, but nonetheless we like it. So I won't walk through the whole process but it's a reality show. There's eliminations. There's contests and such. But the part that is the most intriguing to me is the part where the contestants when they get to this level, are the most nervous. In fact, there's this exhale of relief when it happens, is that these blades, these knives that they have crafted are going to be put to the test by experts who know how to utilize them, and I won't duplicate the accent of the young man who typically is the one who shares what I'm about to do, but one of the first things they do is they take this blade or this knife and they make a lot of sharp motions to see if the blade will cut, and when it does, he turns to them and says, "It will cut." And there's like, phew, it will cut. Then they take a large object that's usually very heavy and very dense and they're not just testing the sharpness of the blade but the strength of the blade, and when they get through that exercise, those contestants love to hear this phrase, "It will kill," meaning that their blade is not only sharp but it is tough.

Notice what it says about the word of God, it's powerful, yes, it is quick and sharper. Notice not as sharp. It is sharper than any twoedged sword. That means no matter what the situation is, no matter what our perspective and no matter what happens in life, there is nothing that the word of God hasn't given us to guide us through that, and so as we walk through the Scriptures and as we see that it has the power to remove the obstructions of our life, it says here at the end of verse 12 that it is a discerner of the thought and intent of the heart. Now, you know, they say confession is good for the soul so I'm going to do a little pastoral confession here. I've had folks come up to me all throughout the years, in recent days, and they've said, "Pastor, you know, when you were preaching that message or when you were teaching that passage, man, you were talking straight to me. It's like you had been in my house for the last few days." I want to share something with you, when the Lord's working on me and I'm working on the message, whatever it may be, whatever the context is, I've got news for you, I'm not thinking about you. I'm not. I'm not sitting there going, "Well, this person or that..." All I'm doing is saying here's what it says, how can we best explain it and what's happening is the Holy Spirit knows your heart and what's happening is I could be, I've had this before, I've been talking about the Gospel and people says, "I know I need to give more." I've been talking about tithing and people say, "I know I need to get saved." You say, "How did that work?" Because the Holy Spirit took a person's heart and molded it and shaped it. You know, I've had people come up to me and say, "Well, pastor, boy, today, man, I mean, you stomped on my toes." I'm sorry, I must've missed, I was aiming for the heart. I mean, seriously. The intents of the heart.

What does it say in that next verse? That we all, every creature, every creature, we are all naked. It's the imagery of Genesis 3. Remember Adam and Eve, they thought they knew best. There they are in the garden of Eden, they thought they knew better than God, they could become wiser than God, smarter than God, so they said, "God, you don't know what you're doing. We got this." What happened immediately thereafter? They realized

they were, what? They were naked. They were exposed. In other words, everything about their lives had come forth.

You know, the word of God will do that in our lives. I think one of the reasons we don't want to be under the preaching of the word of God or reading the word of God is because when we do so, we realize that we are the problem and he is the answer. It has the power to not only demonstrate the authority of God but has the ability to take our hearts, that decrepit rotten heart of ours and expose us for who we truly are. The thoughts of the heart.

You know, we live in a social media world and it's kind of a double-edged sword, no pun intended. In light of the recent days and weeks, we're able to get information out like in no days past. We're able to communicate to people all over the world what is happening and how to help. But is it just me or for some reason social media has almost given humanity a pass to not have a filter on what they say? I mean, they'll say anything about anybody. Here's what frightens me: if that's what they'll put in print, what are they really thinking? I mean, think about the things that we say, "Maybe I shouldn't say that. Or maybe I shouldn't go there." But it says it exposes us not just for this image that we present to the world but who we really are at the core.

You see, the proper perspective is that we're the problem. The proper power is the word of God, it shows us where we have rebelled, where we are in error, what needs to be adjusted or changed which is why verse 14 is so wonderful. We find out what the proper provider is. It says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." No matter what you're going through, no matter what life has dealt you, the word of God that is sharper than any twoedged sword always points us to Jesus Christ.

It says we have a great high priest. You know, you may not realize this or not but every single human being whether they claim to be spiritual or religious or not, everybody has employed priests in their life. You say, "Really?" A priest is somebody or something or an entity that you solicit – hear this – to be a mediator on your behalf, in other words, to solve the problems, to answer the questions that are in your life. Now we understand the spiritual or the religious imagery there, I'll even go secular. There are those in our culture who claim that there are no God, there is nothing that is of a spiritual, that we came from dust, we return to dust, it's all just matter. You know, they've actually employed a priest too, it's called knowledge and education. They believe that if they learn more or can acquire more knowledge, they can solve the problems and answer the questions of life. You see, we all have priests.

It says here that a high priest. In Old Testament history, that was the one who went on the Day of Atonement, that was the one who took the lamb that was picturesque of he who was without sin, and would take the blood and put it on the mercy seat on the altar for the forgiveness of sins. But it goes a step further, not just a mediator, not just one on the Day

of Atonement, but notice it calls Jesus the great high priest who ascended into the heavens. Now we all love John 3:16, "For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." It's a great verse. It's a summary of our faith. But a few verses earlier talking to Nicodemus, a very wealthy, educated, religious person, he said, "What is it that he has descended if he has not yet ascended?" In other words, he was saying, "Not only am I going to go in the grave and three days later raise from the dead," but what we see in the book of Acts 1, Jesus ascends on high and according to the book of Hebrews, he always makes intercession for us.

You see, the proper provider, Jesus Christ, the proper mediator, the great high priest, who it says here, he feels our infirmities, and in all ways points we're tempted yet without sin. You know, it's times like this in our community whether in private conversations or in the funeral services I participated in, the questions always arise. You can see them coming, You know they're coming. How could this happen? Why did this happen? When is this going to get fixed? We've all asked those questions at some level, have we not? It says Jesus feels our infirmities, those emotions, those feelings, those thoughts. He understands them. He gets them, yet it says without sin. Our natural, carnal, sinful self is to rebel, to get angry, to get mad, to have all kinds of bitterness, whatever it is, he did without sin. In other words, he bore every emotion you've had this week. He bore every thought you've had, every action you've had, every word you've spoken. He bore those on Calvary because he's the only one who can truly provide the removal of that obstruction in our lives. You see, when we get the proper perspective that we're the problem and he's the answer, then we're led to the proper power that the Lord has instructed us how to handle this. It always leads us to Jesus. He's the only one who can provide.

So the last thing we've got to deal with today is so what's the proper plan? How do we respond to this? Verse 16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Notice it says we don't come with timidity. We don't come with cautiousness. We come boldly before his throne. You know, the best biblical image that I can conjure up when I read that passage is back in the Old Testament in the book of Esther. For those of you not familiar with the story, here is Esther, she's been made the queen but she's of Jewish descent. Her uncle, Mordecai, it has been revealed to those who despise them that a guillotine has been built, an edict has been pronounced and all of those from Jewish descent are going to lose their life. She's debating how to respond, "What do I do?" Mordecai tells her that very famous verse, "For such a time as this, you are in the position you are." They warned her, they said, "Whoa, don't go to the king. You don't have an appointment. You have not been given an invitation. If you go in there unannounced, he can take your head off." So what does she do? She knocks down the door, is what she does. She says, "My head's coming off no matter what happens, I might as well give it a chance." She knocks down the door. She pleads her case and the very person who built the guillotine was taken his life in the same manner. She was preserved. Mordecai was preserved. The people were preserved because she came with an attitude of boldness to a throne. Here it says the throne of Jesus is one of grace.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the definition of grace, it's receiving that which you don't deserve. Let's be honest today, there's not a single one of us, notice I use personal there, not just you, myself included, none of us deserve forgiveness. None of us deserve salvation. None of us deserve a seat in the heavenlies. None of us deserve the mansions that are described in John 14. None of us deserve that. That's why it's called a throne of grace. We come boldly before his throne of grace.

You know, isn't that we're all seeking anyway? Absolution. Forgiveness. Restoration. Redemption. There's a lot of different places that people go looking for all those things but what we discover in the book of Hebrews is nobody can provide it like Jesus Christ can. So today, the challenge, will we discover that the proper perspective is we're the problem, he's the answer? The word of God points us to he is. He's the only one qualified to conquer our sin problem. Would today be the day that you approach him with boldness for the grace that you so need but do not deserve, not just in this life but in the life to come?

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that individual today, maybe you're here for the very first time and maybe you've been on this campus or other church campuses thousands of times, or maybe you're on the other side of the camera and maybe today the proverbial light bulb came on and you realize how desperate you need grace and you need Jesus Christ in your life. I've got great news for you, the Bible says in Romans 10:13, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. You may be thinking, "I don't know how to do that. What does that mean?" Well, simply it means just to cry out from your heart, I guess technically you could say to have a prayer time, and so I want to encourage you just to have a conversation with the Lord. You don't have to have this conversation out loud, you don't even had to say the same words or phrases that I might say, but maybe today is that day where you come boldly before the throne of grace and maybe this is the conversation, maybe this is the prayer in type that you would have. You say, "God, today I want to finally confess what I've been needing to for a very long time, I am the problem and I believe that Jesus Christ is the answer. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to live a sinless on my behalf just as we read. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to pay the price for my sin on his cross and I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he rose from the dead three days later so I could be forgiven and I could be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the problems of life, but I do know that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem so the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe today you had that conversation with the Lord. We'd love to have a conversation with you. We'd love the privilege of just talking it out and praying it out. Maybe you're that person who for the very first time believed on the Lord Jesus Christ or maybe you've been a believer for years and maybe even decades and you realize today that your focus has been in the wrong place, your attention has been misguided, maybe today is one of those days that

even as a believer you just need to talk with someone, pray with someone and be encouraged in the things of the Lord. Whatever it may be, we just want the privilege of doing so.

Heavenly Father, as we continue our time of worship together, God, we thank you that you're a God of second chances, God, you're a God of third chances, fourth chances, and in some of our cases we have lost count for how many times you have given us this privilege to access your throne of grace. But O God, we're not here to talk to you about those times, we're here to talk to you about this time. God, I pray that your Holy Spirit would be so strong in our lives, Lord, that it would be this day that we would deal with what you have put in our lives at this moment. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as our team leads us. Whatever decision, I'm gonna be right here at the front.