

sermon study guide

January 9/10, 2021

Press On: The Cost of Unbelief

Dr. Henry Schorr

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What is an experience that you have had that you either required rescuing or rescued somebody?
2. What qualities of a person makes you more willing to listen to that person's message or advice?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Matthew 13:53-58

3. Contrast what the people observed about Jesus (v. 54) with their preconceived ideas (vv. 55-56). How could they be both astonished and offended by Jesus?
4. What does verse 58 teach about the consequences of unbelief? What other consequences of unbelief have you witnessed or experienced in your life?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Refer to the list in the Sermon Summary under **"How might we sense that our faith and belief in God may be slipping?"** Do you sense that any of these have become a habit in your heart? What might be the antidote?

Read Hebrews 3:12-13

6. Think of someone in your life who needs to be encouraged in their faith? What might it look like for you to encourage them this coming week?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Faith requires belief, willingness to change, and obedience. Which one of these areas are you experiencing victory in? Which are you currently struggling most with? Pray that the Lord would empower you and continue to form faith in your heart.

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 13:53-58

53 When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. 54 Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. 55 "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? 56 Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57 And they took offense at him.

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home."

58 And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Hebrews 3:12-13

12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

sermon study summary

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For the second time in His recorded public ministry Jesus returns to His hometown of Nazareth (Matt. 13:53-58). In both visits the listeners are at first positively astonished by His words. However, His first visit (Luke 4:14-30) ended with the crowd moving to kill Him. In His second visit recorded in the book of Matthew, instead of murderous intent, Jesus was met with intentional unbelieving indifference. Those in his hometown knew of His faithful parents, His own sinless life growing up, and His growing reputation. Even Nicodemus, a religious leader, recognized there was something different about Jesus (John 3:2). Still, the people of Nazareth chose not to believe and submit to His life-changing teaching. Rather they scraped up pathetic excuses for not believing (Matt. 13:55-56). This still occurs today when Christ is preached, as many seek excuses NOT to believe. Unbelief is a choice.

Unbelief is also costly (v. 58). It can prevent us from experiencing God's good purposes for our lives. While God can do anything, He often chooses to work in response to others' faith in Him, even if that faith is small (Mark 9:24, Rom. 8:28). The Bible shows us many examples of those who believed (David, Daniel, a Roman centurion, the two blind men, a Philippian jailor, etc) as well as those who exhibited unbelief (Adam and Eve, Pharaoh, Moses, the rich young ruler, etc). In the latter list we see there is a great cost for not trusting Jesus and instead going our own way.

Hebrews 3:7-11 is a loving warning for believers today within the story of ancient Israel standing on the border of the Promised Land. There God called them to trust Him and cross over into it but they gave in to fear and unbelief. They missed the blessing God had for them. In Heb 3:12-13 believers today are given the same warning. The author exhorts us to encourage one another daily and not slide into unbelief lest we too lose out on all that God has for us.

How might we sense that our faith and belief in God may be slipping?

1. Fear. We may still fear and trust in God in spite of it (Ps 56:3) but watch that our fear does not become greater than our faith.
2. Anxiety. Rest rather in God and His sovereignty knowing He has the future in hand.
3. Frustration or anger, lashing out at others.
4. A grumbling spirit. Given to complaining about the circumstances of life rather than giving thanks to God.
5. Prayer life. Are we going to Him first, including Him in our day and speaking regularly with Him? Prayer demonstrates not just our belief but also our trust in Him.
6. Pride. See Matt 13:57. Don't let our prejudices against the messenger slay the message.

How then do we counter unbelief?

1. Believe in God, trusting that our omniscient God knows what He is doing, has our best interests at heart and that He knows us better than we know ourselves.
2. Be willing to change. This is repentance, choosing to follow Him whether it makes sense to us or not.
3. Do what God says, embracing His values, following His commands, and surrendering our lives to Him by pursuing the mission He calls us to.

May the direction of your heart and life be one of increasingly humble belief in Him, ever willing to change and be obedient to His call.