

Once For All

Lenten Devotions 2025

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Note: Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the English Standard Version.

Second Week of Lent — Monday, March 17

Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in hope. (Hebrews 3:3-6)

Hold Fast

Faithful. Moses and Jesus are both described as faithful, but in different ways. Moses was faithful as one of God's servants. The house in which he served refers to the nation of the children of Israel, whom he led out of Egypt and through the wilderness, bearing with their incessant grumbling, interceding on their behalf to the Lord when they desperately needed God's mercy but were too stubborn to admit it.

Jesus was likewise faithful, not as one of God's servants (though He certainly came among us as One who serves) but as God's Son. His task was similar yet far greater than Moses', for He came to deliver us from slavery to sin and to lead us to true freedom. Like the children of Israel, we are often stubborn or indifferent to the One who loves us so. But He remains faithful, steadfast in His mercy and grace toward us.

When we trust in Christ, we are adopted forever by the Father. We become members of His house, His family. It is to this reality we are to hold fast. The J.B. Phillips version puts succinctly when it encourages us to "maintain our trust and joyful hope steadfast to the end."

Dear Savior, I trust in You. I put my hope in You. Keep me steadfast to the end. Amen.

Tuesday, March 18

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts..." (Hebrews 3:12-15a)

A Soft Heart

"Take care!" Have you ever uttered those words? Perhaps you spoke to them as you gave a big bear hug to a loved one embarking on a long trip or a child entering a challenging situation. "Take care," we say because we love them so.

The same is true of our God. He loves us so much that He tells us to take care. Those are the very words in today's reading, just as yesterday's reading told us to hold fast. Why do we need these reminders? Hebrews 3 explains: because sin is deceitful, because this world can be alluring, and because our own fickle hearts can lead us astray. These are realities of which we should be aware. We do well to be on our guard.

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." Three times the author of Hebrews offers this warning. Why does he warn us? Because he cares! He is saying: Be careful! Take care! Don't be hard-hearted toward the Lord who has done so much for you.

This warning against a hard heart can also be heard as an invitation to have a soft heart. Take care! Keep your heart soft toward your loving Savior. When you hear Him speaking to you, listen. When you read His Word, trust what He says enough to do what He asks. Cling to His promises and praise His name.

Holy Spirit, Grant me a soft heart—today and every day. Amen.

Wednesday, March 19

For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers. For we who have believed enter that rest. (Hebrews 4:2-3a)

Enter by Faith

“Enter at your own risk.” “Employee entrance only.” “Do not enter.” Those are signs you might see on various doorways.

If there was a door marked “God’s rest,” what kind of sign might be fastened to it? Perhaps it would read, “Enter by faith.” And what kind of rest would we find on the other side of the door?

There are various facets to the rest spoken of in Hebrews. For the children of Israel, the rest was something they would experience in the promised land of Canaan. Rest from their wanderings; rest from their enemies. Rest also refers to the cessation of work, such as God resting on the seventh day of creation (not because He was tired, but because the work was complete). And there is a rest of the soul, which Jesus invites us to experience with these compelling words, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Larry Richards, author of *The Teacher’s Commentary*, defines God’s rest as peace despite troubles. Perhaps you need this peace today. Indeed, there may be many ways you would currently fill in the blank “peace despite _____.”

Come in simple faith to the Savior. Tell Him your troubles. Release your cares to Him. Receive His peace. Enter His rest.

Dear Jesus, Keep me in perfect peace as I trust in you (see Isaiah 26:3). Amen.

Thursday, March 20

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joint and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:11-13)

God's Word

“Strive to enter that rest.” Hmmm, I thought we entered by faith.

This seeming paradox tells us that the book of Hebrews is both about our salvation and about our sanctification—about receiving the free gift of grace and also growing in grace as God transforms us by His Spirit.

Hebrews 4:12 explains one of the ways we are transformed: through Scripture. In addition to our reading for today, I love the way other translations render this verse:

“The Word that God speaks is alive and active; it cuts more keenly than any two-edged sword: it strikes through to the place where soul and spirit meet, to the innermost intimacies of a man’s being: it exposes the very thoughts and motives of a man’s heart” (J.B. Phillips).

“God’s Word is sharp as a surgeon’s scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey” (The Message).

Listen and obey. This takes us back to the themes we’ve been emphasizing on our Lenten journey: Hearing God’s voice. Responding with a soft heart. Trusting Him enough to do what He asks.

Dear Lord, Thank You for the gift of Your Word. May it do in my heart the work you intend so that I am transformed. Thank You that I need not fear Your all-seeing gaze, because You always work for my good and for Your glory. Amen.

Friday, March 21

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Draw Near

“It wasn’t what I expected,” spoken by our young niece as she accompanied us on vacation many years ago. We took her to a variety of interesting and spectacular sites—sand dunes, cave dwellings, mountain peaks, hidden waterfalls. Each time we inquired if she liked a particular place, she said, “It wasn’t what I expected.” It seems she had a picture in her mind of what each place would be like, and then it turned out differently.

That’s a lot like life, isn’t it? We think, we hope, we have a picture of how things will be, but sometimes what we end up with isn’t what we expected. We don’t really know what life will hold.

In the midst of so much that is uncertain, today’s reading offers us rock-solid certainties. Jesus, our great High Priest, has “passed through the heavens.” He has died, risen and ascended to open the way to the Father. He remembers what it is like to be human, so He is gentle and sympathetic with us in our weaknesses. And when we draw near to Him, we know exactly what we can expect: mercy and grace in every time of need.

You can rely on these certainties today.

Dear Jesus, You are my faithful, kind and gracious Savior. Thank You that when I heed Your invitation to draw near, I can confidently expect mercy and grace. Amen.