

SELF CONTROL IS OF THE LORD

MARCH 19, 2018

We are in our last bit of the Fruit of the Spirit series. We are on self-control. I don't know why I feel more comfortable with self-control as a topic than I do other things. Possibly because self-control feels like something I can control even though I don't do as good a job of it as I should, at least it feels like I should have control of that. It feels like something I can do rather than something I have to grow into and let the Holy Spirit do in me, although we are going to see that really that is a backward way of looking at self-control. Self-control is a fruit of the spirit. That means that if we are not self-controlled in some area then we are not being controlled by the spirit. That is such a convicting thought. Really, I think that has been the conviction of the whole series. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control - if we are not walking in those things then we are not being led by the Holy Spirit. It is very convicting. We see our shortcomings and we are attempting to grow in those virtues and we're leaning into the Holy Spirit. We've talked about how we have to be rather than do. We have to be with the Holy Spirit rather than always trying to do everything on our own because he is the one who brings that fruit to bear.

Regarding fruit of the spirit, then, as self-control is related, I love this quote by St. Augustine: "Total abstinence is easier than perfect moderation." That is so true. The problem with it, though, is you can't be abstinent in matters like eating or even sex if you're married. The Church Fathers lump three things under this category of self-control. They call it temperance or continence. When we're talking about self-control or continence, they are speaking specifically about the virtue that bridles concupiscence or passions, as the saints say. Our passions, our fleshly passions, are usually food, drink, and sex-related. Abstinence, chastity, and modesty. Abstinence is the restraint that we deploy in partaking in food and drink and sex. The hardest duty for us, for our flesh, is self-restraint in food and drink and the physical pleasures that go along with being human. When Augustine says total abstinence is easier than perfect moderation, you can't just be totally abstinent from food. Self-control, in the Scriptures, is put forth the New Testament as among the most important, or at least very important, Christian virtues. It's usually St. Paul who talks about it; in fact, overwhelmingly it is St. Paul who talks about self-control. I love that. When I think of self-control in the Bible I usually think of him, just because he seems to have been so disciplined. St. Peter, in his second letter in Chapter 1:3, he says "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promise that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion and become partakers of the divine nature. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these things is blind and short-sighted and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins." I really like that.

What is interesting to me about what St. Peter does here is he sort of inverts the order that St. Paul gives us in the fruit of the spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. St. Peter starts with self-control and works backward to charity, or love.

031918_Self Control is of the Lord

Either way, he says the very same thing: It's impossible to really know God unless you are practicing self-control. Honestly, one of the things I like about John of the Cross is he talks about how in the very beginning of our walk with God in our discipline, God is teaching us to be self-controlled. He is teaching us to be disciplined. We go to prayer because it feels good to begin with, and then he withdraws the feelings and suddenly it doesn't feel good anymore. We have to push through the lack of emotion and feeling because God is teaching us not to depend on our feelings. He's teaching us to have faith. That's self-control. We have to force ourselves to push through that. When you are leaving behind the sins of the world, specifically these that we just spoke of, it takes a lot of self-control and discipline. You're constantly controlling your passions early on in your walk with God. Later, there are faults that we deal with as a rule. Some of us have particular faults in particular areas. Some of our predominant faults are self-medication which come from other roots, but we all deal with self-control, especially in the very beginning of our walk with God because we are trying to leave behind those mortal sins, the things that get us into big trouble. The rule then, and we talked about this in the very first show, is that the flesh wars against the spirit. Paul says in Galatians 5:16, "But I say, walk by the spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other to prevent you from doing what you should or what you would. But if you are led by the spirit you are not under the law." If we're not self-controlled, Dear One, we are not walking in the spirit. It's really that plain. I realize that we all battle certain areas and I get it, but it's really that simple. If we are constantly falling in an area of self-control, in our passions, then we really need to do some concentrated work with the Holy Spirit to eradicate those particular passions. That's what Lent is for, and I think this is so appropriate as we are wrapping up Lent that we are talking about self-control. When God is trying to teach us and wean us away from these desires of the flesh that choke out our self-control, he puts us in the desert.

I was leaving the Baptist church and moving in the direction of the Catholic church, I say he put me on the shelf. We had experienced those two church splits and I just started looking around thinking "There has got to be a better plan. I know God's heart for his people in the church and his pastors, and this church splitting on an every-5-year rotating basis is not Biblical, it's not godly, and it's sinful." It was rebellion that split heaven, the first rebellion of Satan. I knew that there was something wrong. At the same time, we left the church that we - my husband and myself - had served in for so long. We went and hid, really, in a megachurch. When I say mega I mean like 8,000 families. It was so big all of the service areas were pretty much full of people who were using their gifts in service to that church, so there wasn't room for me to offer my spiritual gifts. I spent a whole lot of time in the pew really evaluating where I was spiritually. At the time I really enjoyed not serving. I hadn't been burned out so I wasn't excited to leave ministry or service at all, it wasn't like I was trying to escape, it just happened as part of it. I enjoyed it very much. I enjoyed not having to be at church all day long on Sunday. After a couple of weeks I realized, "Wow, this is really nice! It's nice that I don't have to be at church early for Sunday school, then we have church, then we come home and have dinner and go back for meetings and leaderships stuff, then we have choir practice and evening church, then Bible study again..." We were at church all day long on Sundays and you couldn't even get a nap because you were afraid you were going to miss an important meeting.

In that mega church that rest time I was very nice. I got used to it pretty quickly, then I started to chafe under it because I felt guilty that I wasn't using my gifts, and that's really when God began the lessons on self-control. I'm spending time in this megachurch. I'm hiding, my family is hiding, we are supposed to be resting. In the beginning I really appreciated the rest but after about a month I started to get antsy and I felt guilty because I wasn't using my gifts. I went to God and said "I feel guilty about

this” and he started bringing me to this passage in Hebrews 3:7-4:10. He kept saying to me, “I want you to rest.” I kept saying, “Lord, I’m not tired. I don’t need to rest.” He said, “You don’t know how to rest.” He was teaching how to rest, and as he was teaching me to rest he was teaching me self control. He was using that verse in Hebrews 3 to teach me about the Israelites who were also learning about self-control. This is a passage we hear all the time in the mass readings. “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, today when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, as in the day of testing in the wilderness (or desert -- Wilderness and desert are interchangeable terms in the Scriptures) where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for 40 years. Therefore I was provoked by that generation and said they always go astray in their hearts. They have not known my ways. As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. Therefore, brethren, take care lest there be in any of you an evil and unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. 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 share in Christ if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end while it is said today when you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

In this passage, what is interesting is that the Holy Spirit makes rest a metaphor for self-control. He’s saying that your passions will be under control, they will be at rest, when you are doing something particular. He talks about this rest, and he says the reason we don’t have rest in our passions and the reason we don’t have self-control is because we have an evil heart of unbelief. Now, when I read that the first time as a very busy in-service Christian in ministry, I was struck by that. I thought, “Lord, how can you say that about me? An evil heart of unbelief?” I was offended because I could tell specifically that God was applying that to me, and it struck me. It convicted me. I thought, “How can you say that about me? If I want anything, it’s to please you and to do what you want.” That’s just how he speaks to me. I have to have it really clearly like that. When he said that to me I was heartbroken. I thought “What does he mean here?” So I really started doing some digging and what I discovered is remarkable, really, because this passage in Hebrews is quoted, when it says “Therefore as the Holy Spirit says...” and then it says “today when you hear his voice harden not your hearts”, that is a quote from Psalm 95. That is not the only place that this passage is given to us in the Old Testament. It’s a story. It’s quoted here in Hebrews from Psalm 95 but the actual event happened in Numbers 11, 14, and 16. When it talks about the rebellion, that’s at Meribah when the people complained about not having any water. The day of testing was in the desert. The people were so unrestful and so lacking self-control that the episodes got proper names. The rebellion is known later as Meribah, and Massah is the other name for the problem with the manna.

The important part is we have this quote here in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, and that is a quote from Psalm 95, but then that is actually taken from the original story in Numbers. In order to understand what was happening, then, and to find out what God is actually teaching us about, we have to go back to the original story. We have to go back to Numbers and find out what exactly happened. We see that they were in the wilderness, in the desert, and we know that Lent is a time of wilderness or desert. It’s a time of purposeful asceticism where we are purposefully fasting and giving alms in order to make a space for God. This is really the whole point of any Lenten observance. Our schedules, our lives, our hearts, our spirits, are so full of every single thing but God. Fasting and almsgiving in particular make a space for God to come in. In fact, I would even suggest through this passage that we are looking at in Hebrews that if we don’t do this purposely ourselves, if we don’t start to learn this self-control and if we don’t make space for God ourselves, if we really love God we’ll make it for us, meaning we will end up in the desert of God’s making. It’s all a grace, it’s all a mercy, but I don’t know about you, but I’d rather do it purposely than find myself flung in there. That’s what happened to the people. God rescued them from Egypt. Egypt was the place of total slavery. For us, 031918_Self Control is of the Lord

that is a picture of slavery to sin. We are enslaved to our passions, specifically food, drink, and sex, those three things. According to the Church Fathers, when we talk about self-control those are the issues.

For the Israelites, the very first thing they confront is they are thirsty. I read those accounts and I think “God has led them out of Egypt, they are in the desert, it’s hot, it’s sandy, it’s sunny, there is no protection, it’s miserable, and they’re thirsty. How could their complaining about being thirsty be a bad thing?” They get into big trouble there in Numbers 11 and 14 and Exodus 17, not because they are thirsty, although it seems like that when you read the story. They get in trouble because they complain about how thirsty they are while they are in the desert that God is using to teach them self-control and to wean them away from the things that they depend on. This is why we fast. We think that we depend on God but we don’t, because we live in America and western countries where we have plenty to eat and plenty to drink. We don’t really have to depend on God for day-by-day sustenance in the wilderness, and they didn’t have to until they left Egypt. They had the fleshpots and they complained about not having cucumbers and onions. “We had it so good in Egypt where we were enslaved”, they complain. They’re complaining about not having the lusts of the flesh. The flesh is not being fed there in the desert, and that is the whole point. The desert is meant to show you that you need God. You don’t need food, you don’t need water, you don’t need the pleasures of the flesh. We use the pleasures of the flesh to drown out the spirit. That’s really what I’m trying to get at. You know this. You’ve read it and seen it in the saints over and over again, but this is a very practical example in the Scriptures. Because it’s repeated so many times, it’s like your mom says your first, middle, and last name and you know you better listen to whatever she says next. That’s what God is doing. He is repeating it over and over. Today if you hear his voice. It’s always today so it’s always applicable. That’s why we hear it in the mass readings all the time. “Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the day of rebellion in Meribah.” Meribah was where they complained about not having water.

It wasn’t that they didn’t have water, it was that they complained about not having water; and not just the complaining but the murmuring against God. “Why did he drag me out here and stick me in this awful desert and make me thirsty. Now I’m thirsty and I have no water.” And on and on and on. I don’t know about you, but how do you get when you’re hungry? That’s what we’re getting at with a fast or almsgiving. When you give alms and you give until it hurts, it hurts. It’s meant to because what you are doing is making space for God. If you don’t make space for God, you’re not inviting him in. And if you don’t invite the Holy Spirit in, he won’t come in. Creating the space purposely and inviting him into that space is what he’s looking for. If we won’t do it on our own at Lent then we find ourselves in these deserts of here the people are thirsty and then soon we’ll see that they were hungry. As I said, it’s not the fact that they are thirsty and hungry, it’s the fact that they murmur and complain and chafe against it so desperately. They’re not resting. God is trying to say to us, “You should be able to rest without the things that you think you need.” But being without the things we need is what creates the unrest. That’s why he puts us in the desert, so we feel that unrest and we go to him and ask him to fill the need. That’s what it’s meant to do. I hope that makes sense.

I want to thank my new Friends of the Show. I wasn’t able to shout some of you out last week because of the question and answer, so I’m going to just list you all. I just want to thank you all so much. I got a huge surprise this past week from Allyson and I just want to thank her specifically, but all of you: Grace, Jessica, Laura H, Marisa, Monica, Renee, Allyson, Kristen, Tami, Connie, Toni, Millie, and Laura T. That’s two weeks worth. I wanted to shout you out. Thank you so much! I want to tell you, too, part of what you’ve done. I have written four books and I have written them all on my couch. I have

031918_Self Control is of the Lord

done my show and written my books for all this time from my couch, which means that I am in the center of all that is going on in the house. If I am going to record a show or do an interview or anything like that, my whole family has to leave. First of all, I get nervous when they are there and my young one is constantly looking at me and he's making it very hard to concentrate, or someone is walking through or else I'm talking about one of them at the time, or something. It's so distracting so I make them leave. Well, then trying to write books too, it's convenient because I homeschool so it keeps me in the center of what's happening in the house, but also I don't know how I've done it this long! What you did was, my Friends of the Show, you bought me an office. That's what you did. One of you bought me a desk, one of you bought me a filing cabinet. You have bought me an office. I took my young son out of the back bedroom and put him upstairs with his brother and I took over his bedroom. I painted and it's a dedicated office in which I can shut the door. I don't even know what to do with myself. I'll post a picture of it so you can see. I cried. When I got it set up and I put my computer on the desk and my stuff is all in there. I'm packing orders from all over the house and now everything is in that in that one place: all of my books, all of my shipping supplies, everything is in that one area. I don't even know what to do with myself. Thank you from the bottom of my heart because I am writing two books now at one time and I don't think I could do it again. I ended up with a minor tendinitis problem from sitting on the couch. I would prop my laptop up on a pillow and I have a wireless mouse so I can use my computer with or without it, so my mouse was down on the cushion beside me. I just got really bad tendinitis from my wrist being jacked up using the mouse there on the cushion. Now I have an actual desk with an actual desk chair and a filing cabinet! All my stuff is not spread out all over that one couch. You couldn't even sit there because all my papers, my computer, my recording equipment were all always there. I wish I had taken a before picture to compare. Like I said, I don't even know what to do with myself. Everybody in the house has been helping me do it. They are like, "We don't know what to do with ourselves either." I said all of that to say thank you again to Grace, Jessica, Laura H, Marisa, Monica, Renee, Allyson, Kristen, Tami, Connie, Toni, Millie, and Laura T. Of course, those of you who drop little things in the mail occasionally - Julie, I'm thinking of you specifically. I always am surprised. I don't know what.

Now I don't have to have so much self-control and I don't have to force my family to have so much self-control because I have my own room where I can do all this stuff. It's the same principle. What we are really doing is practicing doing without, because it's the doing without that makes us depend on God. We are so full of everything else we don't have space for God and that's why we find ourselves in these deserts and we chafe. The Bible tells us three or four times later that the whole reason God put this account of them in wilderness in the Bible for us is so that we could learn from them. He is trying to teach us something very, very important. True rest comes from rest from these passions, self-control. True rest comes from self-control, and not the legalistic kind of self-control where we are just doing it out of duty or because we are afraid God is going to be mad at us if we don't, or keeping some sort of legalistic rule. Self-control as a matter of loving discipline is what true rest is, because we're not being thrown around by our every whim anymore. I talk in "Unleashed" and "Fearless" how my predominant fault was rebellion and it came out as anger. I was angry all the time. I was being jerked around all the time by this anger. I didn't know how to control it, I didn't know where it came from, it was controlling me. That is what slavery is. Slavery is when we are controlled by something other than the Holy Spirit.

What we see in these accounts, then, is the very first thing they encountered was a lack of water. It wasn't that they were thirsty that got them in trouble, it was that they didn't ask for it. They should have just asked God. "Dear Lord, you are my provider. I need water. Please give me water." And then you wait until God provides water. He's not going to let us thirst to death. That's what he was

031918_Self Control is of the Lord

trying to teach them. That was their very first confrontation. The second was Massah. This is actually one event, the wilderness wanderings, but this event got its own proper name. Massah and Meribah both got proper names. They are notorious events in Jewish history and the Bible says God gave them to us because we're all the same. We do this. I teach classes all the time. Every year there will be somebody who will go, "Those stupid Israelites. They never learned." I'm always like, "What?? You are the Israelite!" We are the Israelites. We do the exact same stuff. That's why he put it in the Bible. Oh, do I have so much I could say on this topic!

The next episode that got them in trouble was they were complaining about the manna. God provided food for them every day in the wilderness through the manna. It would drop from the sky. It was heavenly bread. The book of Wisdom says that it conformed to every taste. If you felt like chocolate cake, your manna tasted like cake. If you wanted steak instead, your manna tasted like steak. That's actually from a Rabbinic tradition out of Judaism that it conformed itself to every taste. It's not just in the book of Wisdom. That's why we talk about the Eucharist today, that the benefits of the Eucharist we receive are according to our disposition. That's what he's doing. He's giving us according to our own disposition, our own taste. It conforms itself also to our disposition. We can only receive what we can receive. The children of Israel, then, as they were wandering through the desert, get this manna every day and they complain about it. They're so sick of the manna. It's heavenly bread! It's angels food, the Bible says. But they complain and they want meat. They miss the fleshpots. The fleshpots in the Old Testament were the pots of roasted meat that they would eat in Egypt. They ate very well in Egypt even though they were slaves. Really, that is probably the point. That's probably the point. You're enslaved to food, you're enslaved to drink, you're enslaved to sex or whatever, because you are satiated. That is what asceticism is supposed to counter. That's why the Church teaches that kind of discipline.

So, they are full of the food of Egypt. God has rescued them from Egypt and stuck them in the desert and now they don't have the fleshpots anymore and they are complaining because they don't have variety. There's no variety in their diet. They complain and murmur, and so God says, "Fine. You want meat? I'll give you meat." It actually says this in the Scriptures: "You're going to eat meat until it comes out your nose." That's what happens. He rains down huge swarms of migrating quail. I mentioned this in either "Fearless" or "Unleashed", or maybe even both of them because this wilderness wandering is such a great metaphor for our lives in this valley of tears of Christians. He sends this covey of migrating quail and they gorge themselves so entirely on the quail that many of them die. My oldest son, when he was about 8 or 9, would complain about what I fixed him for dinner. You know how gets do that. They go through that stage. He would complain every night about whatever it was I put on the table. I just got so sick of that. I went to God about it. I didn't want to be like my dad and just ream it to death over it or be controlling over it or whatever. So I asked God what to do about it. I said, "I want to teach him a lesson but I don't want to be harsh about it." And this is the account that came up in the readings at the time.

So, I was searching with God in prayer about how to deal with my son and his habit of complaining about everything that I would fix for dinner. This story was in the readings. And I thought, "Lord, surely you can't mean what I think you mean." I went straight to the dollar store and I bought 12 boxes of macaroni, because macaroni was my son's favorite meal. I just took a page out of God's good book and the very first morning I put macaroni on the table for breakfast. He sat down and thought he had fallen into heaven. He scooped up that macaroni and ate the whole bowl and was so excited, and I was glad to see it. Lunchtime rolled around and I put another bowl of macaroni in front of him and he ate that too. He was so excited, he didn't even know what had happened that he got this great

031918_Self Control is of the Lord

fortune. What had he done to deserve it? Dinner rolled around and I put macaron in front of him, and he just looked at me. I'll be honest, it really only took one day because right away he knew that there was something very wrong because I had made his favorite dinner. I was trying to hurry it along, I guess. I made his favorite dinner, chicken and rice and broccoli, and he got macaroni. He didn't say anything but I could tell. He didn't know what was happening. He knew he was probably in trouble but he didn't want to ask. I felt sorry for him. I told him, "Son, you don't plan the food, you don't grow the food, you don't buy the food, you don't prepare the food, you don't even clean up after the food, so stop complaining about what I fix you to eat. Either eat it or go hungry, or you're going to eat macaroni until it comes out of your nose." I want you to know that he to this day tells my younger son "You better not complain about dinner because you will eat macaroni until it comes out your nose."

God gave them what they wanted. The Bible says in Psalms 78 and 106 that he gave them what they wanted but they spent their years in futility and purposelessness. This is the thing: If you don't create a Lenten desert for yourself to detach from these things, these passions that control us, he will either put you in a desert to help you with that if he is offering you that grace and that mercy, or else he will just allow you to have what you want and you will be full of everything else. I think of those hoarding shows and how we are so overweight as a culture because we can't stop. We don't know how to let God give to us. We're stuffing and self-medicating for so many other reasons. We're not making room for God to get into those areas and help us deal with the emotions that drive that out-of-control behavior. We see in the scriptures that God says "You can have what you want if you're determined, but you're probably not going to like it." That's our warning through these scriptures in Hebrews and the Psalms, in Psalms 95 and 78 and 106, and also in the original account.

In order to have this rest that Hebrews 3-4 talks about, we have to trust in God's timing, we have to trust in God's provision, and we have to trust in God's rest. Specifically when I use the word rest I am using the word that the book of Hebrews uses in Chapter 4, meaning the Sabbath. We have to trust in God's Sabbath. What that means is in the Old Testament the people of God always fell back into bondage to other nations, to those passions, when they have not or did not keep a proper Sabbath. I which I had time to do a whole show on the Sabbath because it is so good. That's in "Fulfilled", so if you get "Fulfilled" and you read the chapter on sacred time, that's in there. That is one of the most transforming things that I have ever learned from God in the scriptures, and it was during this time that God taught me about it. He was teaching me how to rest both from my passions, but also specifically from my schedule. He was already preparing me for how to rest in the craziness of my life now. He was preparing me. I kept saying, "I'm not tired, Lord! I don't need to rest." And he said, "Just be quiet. You have an evil heart of unbelief. You won't listen to my ways. What are my ways? My ways are desert ways. You have to let me help you and teach you." So I said, "Okay, Lord." It took about a whole year and in that year I ended up being Catholic, which is a whole other story.

There are three main points: We have to trust in God's timing and we have to trust in God's provision. We ask God for what we need and we wait on him to provide it. We create those spaces so that God can give us things rather than us constantly stuffing ourselves with everything in the world to keep from having to ask. That's why prosperity in the Old Testament ended up being a curse most of the time for God's people. They didn't know how to deal with it. They stuffed until they were overflowing with stuff. God can't get into that because there is no space for him. We have to make those spaces. That's what Lent is for. That's what we're doing. We're practicing self-control and this is how we learn it. We learn it in the desert. That's why the scriptures say that they hardened their hearts and they had an evil heart of unbelief. They couldn't rest. "Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil and unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from God." Why do we fall away?

031918_Self Control is of the Lord

Because we're full of everything but him. If we create the space that God can move in and teach us, he will do that, but that means clearing out a space where we can lack, where we can do without something and invite him into that hole.

We trust in God's timing and we trust in his provision. He will give us what we need, always, but he stretches out the timing until we think we are going to end up doing without. And maybe we will do without, and if we do it's because we can do without it. The third thing is trusting in God's rest, and specifically that means making sure to keep a Sabbath. We have to be careful to guard against hurry and busyness and especially materialism. Sunday, keeping a true Sabbath, combats those habits of materialism and hurry and busyness like nothing else will. When you keep a Sabbath properly it contains two things: rest and worship. If you rested on a Sunday, you haven't really worshipped; and if you haven't worshipped on Sunday then you haven't really rested. In order to rest properly, to keep a proper Sabbath, the Bible says that you need to do both of those things. That's why it's a day of obligation. We are interrupting the work week. We are interrupting the busyness, the getting and doing. We're interrupting it with an entire day of not getting and not doing. Doing so makes a space for God. You have one day every week that you make that space for God. You practice that self-control. You don't go shopping. People always ask me when I give this talk, "Well, can I mow the grass?" I don't know. I'm not telling you what you can and can't do. I'm just saying do what's restful. Do what's restful for other people too. It should be a day of rest. No running around. No working. Your laundry will wait. Your dishes will wait. Everything will wait. It takes practice and you have to kind of settle into it a little at a time, but if you practice keeping a proper Sabbath, a Sunday, like you are supposed to, it will change your entire life. If you do it like you should there won't be a need for those times when God sticks us in the desert in order so that we can hear his voice.

"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts", as in the desert. He is speaking to us on a daily basis, on a weekly basis, but we don't know how to hear him because we haven't made a space for him. We have to make space in our daily lives to hear the word of God. That's why I give you the Love The Word™ exercises. That's why I encourage you always to be in the word on a daily basis. I promise I'm going to get to that video to welcome my new Facebook friends and also the new users and listeners. I'll do that and I will run through Love The Word™ and how to do it. That's on the agenda for this week now that my travel schedule has lessened. If we make that space on a daily basis, we do it first, and we also make that space on a weekly basis, we have heard from God and we have been corrected on a regular basis in those areas. We don't have to have this big desert where we have a health problem or we have an emergency or a tragedy, God forbid. It's not that God does these things to us but he allows them sometimes because we need the desert. That's just the truth of it, Dear One.

We have to be careful to trust in God's timing, trust in God's provision, and trust in God's rest. In doing so, we are trusting in Him. That's where we get our self-control. That's where the Holy Spirit can work. We naturally have that self-control, and if we have self-control then we know that we are walking in the spirit. That's why the Holy Spirit is the one speaking in chapter 3 and 4 of the book of Hebrews. The Holy Spirit says, "If you hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Dear One, if we're not practicing self-control, if we don't have control in our appetites, then we are not being led by the Holy Spirit. We need to spend that time on a daily basis and a weekly basis getting in touch with him so that he can help us with that.

