

## **The Dangers Of A Hard Heart**

### **Hebrews 3:7-19**

#### **Introduction**

The book of Hebrews claims that Jesus is better than prophets (1:1-3); better than angels (1:4-14); better than Moses (3:1-4:13).

We cannot give up on Jesus or the hope of the Gospel. What happens to people who miss Jesus? These people miss God's rest. We are to obey Jesus and obey Him supremely. We must believe the promise of salvation; the forgiveness of sin and the hope of heaven. We must not harden our hearts (vv.7-11); we must be ever vigilant of the dangers of unbelief (v.12) and encourage and exhort one another daily (vv. 13-19).

#### **Warning: Do Not Harden Your Heart (vv.7-11)**

*Hebrews 3:7-19 (NKJV)* *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice,*

The writer of Hebrews tells us the Holy Spirit speaks; the word 'says' is in the present tense. The Holy Spirit speaks and has something to say today! The writer of Hebrews has already told us that God has spoken in the past through the prophets and continues to speak to us by His own dear Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

*8Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,*

The Old KJV translates this "harden not your hearts as in the provocation"—or here rebellion (Psalm 95:8); "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness". They translate two Hebrew words; *Massah and Meribah-(Exodus 17:1-2; Numbers 20:1-13)*.

The wanderings revealed the true condition of their hearts; they didn't really believe God, they didn't really trust their leaders (Moses and Aaron) and they began regretting ever leaving Egypt (the world).

What does it mean to harden your heart?

The writer will use the wilderness wanderings of the Jewish people as an example of what not to do!

The writer will draw on the nation of Israel as an illustration of the journey of the Christian. The Jews were in bondage in Egypt. We were in bondage to sin in this world. The Lord God redeemed Israel by the blood of a lamb at Passover; and Christ redeems us by His blood through the death on a Cross. God promised the Jews a land of blessing; and we have been offered a spiritual inheritance in Christ. The blessing could only come to those who left Egypt and followed the Lord by faith into the promised land. And so God took them through the Red Sea (separation from Egypt; the world) and led them to the border of the land of Canaan.

Deuteronomy 1:2—tells us the journey took 11 days. But at this point Israel rebelled and in bitter unbelief refused to believe God (Numbers 14). You remember the story of how Joshua and

## **The Dangers Of A Hard Heart**

### **Hebrews 3:7-19**

Caleb and the other leaders went in to spy out the land. Ten of the spies reported that the land was filled with giants; people who did not want to leave, fortified cities, impossible to overcome. Joshua and Caleb reported a land flowing with milk and honey and giant grape vines. Yes the land was occupied; but with faith and confidence in the Lord who delivered them from Egypt; the same true and living God would protect them, defend them and fight for them. Joshua and Caleb wanted to trust the Lord. The people refused to trust the Lord.

And God judged the entire congregation. The Jews wandered in the wilderness for 40 years; a year for each day the spies were in the land. The nation did not enter into the promised rest (see Deuteronomy 12:9; Joshua 1:13-15).

All Jews were familiar with the story. The person who has received Christ is redeemed by the blood of Jesus, set free from the world. But some Christians are tempted to go back—turn around, return to a life of bondage. Like Israel—some Christians are tempted to turn back.

A refusal to enter the land was a refusal to enter into blessing and favor and rest.

*9Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years.*

The people of Israel “tested” (peirazomai) and “tried” (dokimazo)—they tested—that is put Him to the test—to see if He met their approval; if God proved faithful—then He was worthy of their loyalty and obedience. They wanted God—to prove Himself—and then they would trust Him. They wanted a provision—but no suffering—no pain—no inconveniences. They were unwilling to prove themselves—unwilling—to show they really believed God—really trusted God.

In Exodus 15:22 the Children of Israel were thirsty and the Lord met their need. In chapter 17 the congregation was thirsty again—and the people did not remember God’s mercy. The people criticized Moses and murmured against the Lord—a very great sin (1 Cor.10:1-12).

They tested the Lord, tried the Lord, suggesting that God did not really care about them or was willing to help them. They were trying God’s patience by willful, repeated, complaints.

Moses did what we all should do; he cried out to God, begged for guidance; and the Lord instructed him to take his rod and smite the rock and water would flow. The rock is Christ (1 Cor.10:4) and the smiting of the rock speaks of Christ’s death on the cross; where Jesus experiences the rod of the curse of the law (the same rod—turned into a serpent—and was used to bring the plagues on Egypt). In Numbers 20:1-13 there is a second experience with the rock. God commanded Moses to speak to the rock—in self-will will Moses smote the rock. Because of that sin Moses was not permitted to enter Canaan. By smiting the rock—Moses spoiled the type—because Jesus—died once for sin—the Spirit is given once—and we receive—additional fillings by asking God—not by asking Jesus to die over and over and over again. 1 Corinthians 10:4 says that Israel “drank of that spiritual rock that followed them”.

## **The Dangers Of A Hard Heart**

### **Hebrews 3:7-19**

The Lord gave them what they needed. Food—guidance—protection. But the people continued to harden their hearts against God.

*10Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.'*

Why was the Lord angry? They provoked Him (v.8); they tried Him (v.9). The Lord promised to meet their needs and did. They may not have had life's luxuries but they had life's necessities. They had God's care and provision and the promise of a new land and rest! But they always went astray!

They refused to believe God. 40 years of disobedience and no trust.

What is God's way? It is the way of faith, trust, obedience. Instead of flinching and fudging in trial; we learn to—

- (1) Draw close—draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
- (2) Learn To Fellowship with God
- (3) Learn To Trust The Lord
- (4) Learn To Depend On The Lord
- (5) Learn To Walk With The Lord

*11So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' "*

The word 'rest' is important in our understanding of the passage and the book of Hebrews. It will be used 12 times in chapter 4 but not always with the same meaning (see Wiersbe's *Expository Outlines of the New Testament; pp.682-683*).

Wiersbe points out three different rests in chapters 3 and 4; all that point to God's plan;

- (1) The rest of salvation (4:3,10)
- (2) The rest of victory while in great trial or tribulation (4:11)
- (3) The rest that in eternity future; we might think of this as a heavenly rest (4:9)

We will study those more in chapter 4; the exhortation here for the people of God is to trust God, like Joshua and Caleb; to move into the promised rest; here Canaan is not a picture of Heaven—but rather a symbol of the life of battle and blessing—progress and victory—that we have in Jesus as we yield to Him, walk with Him, trust Him. We have a present rest—in Christ even in trial and testing. This is a kind of rest that Moses cannot give!

**Danger: The Disaster Of Unbelief (v.12)**

## **The Dangers Of A Hard Heart**

### **Hebrews 3:7-19**

*12Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;*

Do you remember in chapter 2 the writer of Hebrews encouraged his listeners not to drift from the Word of God (2:1-4); or doubt the Word of God (3:7)?

The heart of unbelief abandons the Word of God and departs from the living God.

This is exactly what Israel did. They failed to believe God, to trust God, that God would care and provide and give them the promised land and rest.

Do I have an evil heart of unbelief?

Where do you stand with the Lord? Aloof? Distant? Are you in rebellion? Do you believe God or trust God?

Do you walk wisely in the house of God? Would you characterize your walk as a walk of love (Eph. 5:1-2). Are you walking carefully (Eph. 5:15); in the truth, in dependence upon the Lord and submissively to the Lord (Col. 2:6)? We are to walk in love, in the Spirit, in truth, in newness of life, worthy of the Lord.

### **Decide: To Encourage Each Other Daily (vv.13-19)**

*13but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

The word 'exhort' (Parakaleo) means to "beg, entreat (plead) exhort" (see Wuest Hebrews Vol. 2: p.69). It is one of the Titles of the Holy Spirit (Comforter). The word is filled with comfort—the picture is one who is broken down or fallen—and another comes and provides aid or assistance.

The Bible provides weighty (substantive) words of Comfort. Comfort is both light and heavy. When the Lord speaks—we can trust His words. When the Lord told the children of Israel; "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you" (Exodus 12:13). They were safe—because the blood was sprinkled over the door-posts and the lintel. Every believer in Christ is safe—because we rest in the work of Christ, sure of the work of Christ, sure of the word of God.

We will encourage one another. We will separate ourselves from sin. We will trust in our Father's care. We will look to the Lord for security, and stability, preservation and protection.

We want to guard against a hard heart of unbelief.

The writer gives several reasons. Let's look at a few.

## **The Dangers Of A Hard Heart**

### **Hebrews 3:7-19**

*14For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,*

*15while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*

*16For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?*

*17Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?*

*18And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?*

*19So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

The reasons:

1. The clock is ticking, the time is short. Encourage and exhort each other today and everyday. Ephesians 5:15-16; “See then that you walk circumspectly (attention to detail, carefully, diligently), not as fools but as wise. (16) redeeming the time, because the days are evil”. Time is short. Today is the day of salvation. Tomorrow might be too late. People die—sometimes unexpectedly. We are a flower quickly fading, here today and gone tomorrow, a wave of the ocean, a vapor in the wind.

2. Hearts are getting harder. Because sin is deceitful. Sin looks good, tastes good, offers pleasure for a moment—but it enslaves us. The temporary numbness gives way to a more profound emptiness. Sin leaves the human heart empty, lonely, hurt, shattered, broken. Sin divides families and destroys fellowship. And the more sin—the more callous scars. Sin begets sin and nourishes sin and the more a person sins the easier it is to continue in sin. One sin prepares the heart for the next sin. Psalm 95:8; “Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness”.

3. Salvation is conditional—we are not saved by wishful thinking—we are saved by Christ in Christ—we must hold fast our confidence in the Lord Jesus and His salvation. We are partakers of Christ—we hold fast to Him. If you are not holding fast to Jesus—you are not holding on! We hold fast to Jesus we have become partakers of Jesus. 2 Peter 3:17-18; “You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; (18) but grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

4. Each day is important—we must hear today (v.7;15); do not allow sin to plug your ears or blind your eyes or harden your heart. Do not depart from God, do not provoke God.

## **The Dangers Of A Hard Heart**

### **Hebrews 3:7-19**

5. Some do provoke God. They live in rebellion, in disobedience; not believing, not trusting—and this invites provocation.

6. Judgment is certain. God has issued His judgment; those who believe and trust and obey the Lord—will be fine—those who reject and refuse to trust God and continue down the road of rebellion—will find themselves condemned and judged. There is no second option or alternative road—that leads to life apart from the gospel, grace and Christ.

7. God will judge unbelief. The words “believed not” (apeitheo)—means to refuse to be persuaded; to refuse to believe; to withhold belief. This is the person who refuses to believe—despite the evidence that Jesus is truly the Savior.

8. Unbelief isolates—alienates—and leaves a person outside—instead of inside. Nothing will close the doors quicker than unbelief—unbelief—keeps a person from experiencing God’s rest.

Someone has said that unbelief is not the cause of sin; sin is the cause of unbelief.

A.W. Pink wrote; “none but the Lord himself can afford us any help from the awful workings of unbelief, doubting and carnal fears, murmurings. Thank God one day we will be done forever with unbelief.”

### **Conclusion**

How do we avoid a hard heart? When we hear God’s message we heed God’s message.  
How do we avoid a hard heart? We encourage each other daily.

Someone once suggested that Noah and his sons may have enlisted other carpenters or people to help build the ARK.

Many hundred years ago  
    They ventured to remark  
That Noah had some carpenters  
    To help him build the Ark.  
But sad to say on that last day  
    When Noah entered in,  
Those carpenters were left outside  
    And perished in their sin.

How sad to think they may have  
    Helped to build the Ark so great,

**The Dangers Of A Hard Heart**  
**Hebrews 3:7-19**

Yet still they heeded not God's Word  
And awful was their fate.  
Today the same sad fate exists  
Among the sons of men, they  
Help to build the so-called Church  
Who are not born again.

They stay behind for sacrament,  
They work, they sing, they pray;  
Yet never have accepted Christ,  
The Life, the Truth, the Way.  
Another judgment day will come,  
As sure as came the flood,  
And only those will be secure  
Who shelter 'neath Christ's Blood.