

Hebrews 3:1-6 NKJV Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, (2) who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also *was faithful* in all His house. (3) For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. (4) For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God. (5) And Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*, (6) but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

In the first 6 verses we were taught that

1. We are holy brothers and sisters who share in a heavenly calling
2. Our calling is not to a church, that may be a group of like-minded believers, but to a Person, Christ Jesus
3. Our Savior is the **first** Apostle **and** our great High Priest.
4. Our Savior was and is faithful to His Father
5. Our Savior has more glory than Moses over whose face a veil was placed because the people were afraid to come near.
6. Moses was an attendant over the house, but Jesus built the house.
7. As the builder and owner of the house, that is, the Body of Christ, **we are to hold fast and rejoice in our GREAT salvation** (Heb 2:3) and we are to boast only in the Lord for no person can save him/herself.

The next section runs from 3:7 thru the end of Chapter 4 (which will have to be studied next week). This is a large section with repetition, warnings, and emotionally charged ideas. I tore up my first draft of today's teaching because, going verse by verse was interfering with the flow of thought in these chapters (at least in my mind...). So, I thought I'd do something that is still expositional, but I will tackle it a bit differently.

This section tells a story and so in a sense, is a story within a story – an Old Covenant story given in the context of New Covenant revelation. I want to present the original story and then see what the author is teaching his readers then and to us today.

The precedent for doing this has Paul's approval, so to speak:

1 Corinthians 10:1-6 NKJV (1) Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, (2) all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, (3) all ate the same spiritual food, (4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (5) **But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.** (6) **Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.**

Example #1 - verse 5 - will be the subject of our current chapter, not entering the rest that God prepared for them.

1 Corinthians 10:7-10 NKJV (7) And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY." **(8)** Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; **(9)** nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; **(10)** nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

Example #2 – verse 7 was taken from the golden calf incident. In Exodus 32.

Example #3 – verse 8 – was when the men of Israel had sex with the women of Moab and even participated with them in their idol worship. From Numbers 25. BTW: Paul said 23,000 fell and Numbers 25:9 says 24,000. Paul did not include all the leaders who were hung in the sun.

Example # 4 – verse 9 – was the incident with the fiery serpents who killed all those who complained against Moses and God. In His mercy, God commanded that a bronze serpent be created and set on a pole; If the people would looked up at it, they would not be affected if the serpent bit them. Significant because Jesus referred to this incident in John 3:14-15

John 3:14-15 NKJV And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **(15)** that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

We too were bitten, so to speak, with the deadly venom of sin. We too would have died had Jesus not been lifted up for us to see with the eyes of faith like they had.

Example # 5 – verse 10 – this is thought to be a generic reference to all the other times God had to judge the children of Israel during the journey to the Promised Land. Someone counted at least 10 different times.

1 Corinthians 10:11-14 NKJV (11) **Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.**

Once again, we are to consider what happened in the past to learn how God expects us to respond to His Gracious offer of Salvation. And then learn of our responsibilities once we receive!

(12) Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

And to beware of pride that deceives us into thinking “only others can fall...never me”.

Now onto Hebrews 3. Let me read the entire section from verse 7 thru verse 19. Then we will return to look at it more detail.

Hebrews 3:7-19 NKJV Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, (8) DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION, IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, (9) WHERE YOUR FATHERS TESTED ME, TRIED ME, AND SAW MY WORKS FORTY YEARS. (10) THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THAT GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN MY WAYS.' (11) SO I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.' " (12) Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; (13) but exhort one another daily, while it is called "TODAY," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (14) For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, (15) while it is said: "TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION." (16) For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? (17) Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? (18) And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? (19) So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

This section refers the reader back to the time when Israel was poised to enter the Promised Land. It's written about in Numbers 13 & 14. You probably know the story of how 12 spies were sent into Canaan to check things out. When they returned after 40 days they gave their report:

So, Moses, we have good news and bad. The good news is: It is a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And look at this cluster of grapes! It took 2 men to carry it back! But the bad news is: the people who dwell in the land *are* strong; the cities *are* fortified *and* very large; We saw the descendants of Anak there, you know, those giants who make us look like grasshoppers!. AND, if that's not enough, we'd be surrounded by our enemies. The land is full of the 'ites'!

Oy Vey!

Then Caleb said "Hey, that's no big deal; we have God on our side! We can do this, men!"

But the ten men who had gone up with him said, "Nope, Nada, No way Jose". Then they whined about wanting to return to Egypt where they were slaves...but, hey, at least they wouldn't die in this 'God-Forsaken' land. (oops...wrong thing to say!)

Then, when they took up stones to kill Caleb and Joshua, God intervened. He was ready to wipe out the everyone and start over when Moses once again interceded for them.

Moses said to the LORD: Please don't do that. It'll only take away Your street cred and Your rep will be toast. I mean how would You feel if the Egyptians scoffed saying "Their God brought them out of our land, but He couldn't bring them into a better land!".

The LORD relented and, even though the people tested Him over and over. They did not heed His Voice and did not truly know His Ways.

So, He wouldn't destroy them all then and there. Those who were 20 years of age and older would die in the wilderness without seeing the Promised Land. And He said, "oh by the way, your **sons** shall be shepherds in the wilderness **forty years** (1 year for each day the spies were away). Your children will bear the brunt of your **infidelity and rejection**, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness."

As it turned out, only 2 people from that older generation entered the promised land – Joshua and Caleb. Even Moses blew it by using a stick and not his words.

So, now let's go back to our passage in Hebrews to try to understand what's being taught here. The writer to the Hebrews knows that his readers understand the story. And so, he gives a hard warning:

"TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, (8) DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION, IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, (9) WHERE YOUR FATHERS TESTED ME, TRIED ME, AND SAW MY WORKS FORTY YEARS. (10) THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THAT GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN MY WAYS.' (11) SO I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.' "

Psalm 95 is used as the Scripture references here. I think it's important to hear what the psalmist wrote:

Psalms 95:1-11 NKJV Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. (2) Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. (3) For the LORD *is* the great God, And the great King above all gods. (4) In His hand *are* the deep places of the earth; The heights of the hills *are* His also. (5) The sea *is* His, for He made it; And His hands formed the dry *land*. (6) Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. (7) For He *is* our God, And we *are* the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. *Today, if you will hear His voice: (8) "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, (9) When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work. (10) For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.'* (11) So I swore

in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' "

If you don't hear the first 7 verses, the importance of the remaining verses might allude you.

First: IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE. Believers, to whom the letter is written, have heard His voice, thru those who preached the Gospel to them. Why else would he call them "holy brethren"?

Second: DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION, IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS. This is the warning. Why say it if it wasn't possible for some of them to harden their hearts?

Third: The issue is laid out as "You saw My works for forty years, BUT you kept going astray in your hearts by seeking after other things. You did this because you did not truly know My Ways. My Way was to lead you, feed you, satisfy your thirst and protect you! Why would you want to turn your heart away from Me?"

Fourth: Therefore, You will not enter My Rest. This rest refers to the Promised Land.

Fifth: We are told (perhaps by reading between the lines) that this also might refer to the readers of the letter at that time and, truly to us as well.

Hebrews 3:12-19 NKJV Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; (13) but exhort one another daily, while it is called "TODAY," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (14) *For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,* (15) while it is said: "TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION." (16) For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? (17) Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? (18) And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? (19) **So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.**

And again, a solemn warning: **BEWARE, brethren!** If you are considering departing the Living God, it is because of an evil heart of UNBELIEF. And this type of heart has been hardened through the deceitfulness of sin! This unbelief is exactly like the Israelites. It doesn't happen over night and the hardening doesn't either. But it does happen when we tempt God with our desire to sin and become resentful **when He doesn't rescue you.**

Wait! That part about **not** rescuing us, is that true? Well, let's see.

Back in 1 Corinthians 10, after Paul gives several examples of sin and idolatry (a.k.a.,

rebellion and betrayal), he states very clearly – humble yourselves in the sight of the LORD (that is, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall)...**NOT** just in judging others, but also in **NOT** judging yourself!)

Paul clearly says:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; **but God is faithful**, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation **will also make the way of escape**, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV)

Does not God rescue? Perhaps you wanted something more dramatic? Let's keep this in mind as we continue in our passage in Hebrews:

Notice that the writer repeats verse 6 in verse 14: *For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,*

And once again, verses 7 and 8 are repeated in verse 15:

TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION."

Repetition is an indication of importance!

Who hardened their hearts? Those who came out of the bondage of Egypt by signs and miracles and the Mighty Arm of the LORD! These were led by Moses and heard the Voice of God. But they rebelled, they sinned, they would not obey.

And so, the author concludes:

So, we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. (Hebrews 3:19 NKJV)

What is the writer saying? It appears that the warning is, "Do not allow the sin of unbelief to enter and take root in your heart. If it does, eventually, you will yearn for something else and then perhaps depart from the Living God."

For many of the readers at that time were turning from the Living God to return to a dead religion known as "rabbinic Judaism". It was works-based, and the rules and consequences were clearly defined. Perhaps there's comfort when there are many boundaries. Certainly, it was easier than dealing with all the persecution and rejection they were experiencing as believers! These boundaries deceived them into thinking that they were safe. No, they were lost because they rejected Jesus and His great salvation

He brought. The religion to which they returned could not satisfy, could not save, could not transform because it was just dead works.

Can this really happen to a true believer? I mean, can a true believer abandon God and return either to a works-based religion or paganism or atheism? Can I re-read the last paragraph and substitute the "they's" with "we"?

The book of Hebrews, like all Scripture, is timeless. Therefore it seems to indicate that if "holy brethren" were being warned then, then we "holy saints" are being warned today. And, Paul, speaking to Timothy about some who turn away from Jesus, said:

Now the Spirit expressly says that **in latter times some will depart from the faith**, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, **having their own conscience seared with a hot iron**, forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-3 NKJV)

Whoa! Pastor Stu, are you saying then that some of us will depart the faith?

Not if I have anything to do with! And that's not bragging. I have a responsibility to teach the full counsel of God. We cannot read this one chapter without reading more, in this book, and in the rest of Scripture.

If you have strong opinions on eternal security, perseverance of the saints, atonement, personal responsibility and other salvation issues, hold on to them because we don't have time to discuss them today.

However, my comfort to you **TODAY** is to think about one verse and determine why it is a comfort:

Hebrews 3:15 NKJV while it is said: "TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION."

There is a condition "IF" and a warning "DO NOT", but is there a word of hope? Try to think it thru without a study bible or commentary first. But if you are stymied, send me an email and I will respond with a hint. Only after that check out your study bible or commentary!

Father, I pray for the saints in this church body. I pray that I may have caused some to examine themselves as it says in Your word:

Psalms 26:2 NKJV Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart.

Or

[Psalms 139:23 KJV](#) Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

Holy Spirit, as they meditate on Your Word, illuminate it so that they will come to know Your Ways. For Your Way is revealed here for them to see; it will become a light on the path to Your Heart!

AMEN.