

Hebrews 3B

- Review
 - The author writes to a church over his concerns of their reported apostasy
 - On the one hand, he is disturbed by the prospect that believers will shrink back from their walk into spiritual maturity
 - On the other hand, he is fears that unbelievers who have attached themselves to the church and having never received the truth, will soon tire of the charade and turn back to their old ways
 - So far the writer has used a couple of proofs from the OT to encourage the readers to remain committed to Jesus
 - He has proven that Jesus was worthy of their honor as He is more majestic than angels a
 - And He is faithful and honorable than Moses
 - And the writer has deliver the first of five warnings to his readers concerning apostasy
 - He said we can't expect to escape God's displeasure if we do not accept nor guard the salvation revealed in Christ
 - So the writer has laid some important ground work up to this point
 - But until chapter 3, he hasn't made much effort to distinguish one group from the other
 - He hasn't made clear his concerns for unbelievers apart from believers
 - He has left the two groups lumped together
 - But that's about to change tonight
- Tonight we begin in Chapter 3:7, at the beginning of the second warning
 - Verse 6 – he has just throw out this provocative challenge
 - You are a part of God's house (Christ's house), IF...

- You hold fast to your confidence and boast in your hope of salvation
- In other words, the definition of a true Christian is the one who has fully and finally placed their trust in the one true hope never to seek a better hope
- Last week we examined some of the meaning behind those words
 - We saw that there was a public testimony and a private testimony implied in that verse
 - One word we didn't look at very closely was hope
 - So I need to make one point regarding the Biblical use of that word
 - We typically use the word hope when some degree of uncertainty exists
 - We hope it doesn't rain today
 - We hope we win the lottery
 - We hope our children clean their room (which would be like hitting the lottery in my case)
 - The Bible uses the word differently
 - The Bible uses the word like we use the word "expect"
 - Elpis = expectation
 - I expect to win the lottery, I expect to be resurrected
 - It is not wishful thinking, but absolutely confidence in a future event
 - Yet it remains unseen for now, thus it is properly called a hope
- Given what the writer has said in verse 6, he has thrust one group into the foreground
 - Which one?
 - The potential unbelievers among the brethren

- Now, sharp students will remember how this chapter began, with the writer addressing the readers as brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling
- So I think his readers were a bit taken aback by his comment
 - They probably thought, If we are brethren, then why suggest we aren't a part of God's house?
- This tactic by the writer is nothing short of genius
 - It's a masterstroke
 - It is perfectly calculated for effect
 - But it can only be fully appreciated by those who are thinking as Jewish man and women of the first century would have thought
 - So we need to work a little tonight to pick up some of those nuances
- The writer knows that every single member of his audience believes they are faithful followers of God
 - Even if some may not be
 - This is always the way it works
 - Unbelievers congregating within the church are always unaware that they are without true faith
 - They are living a lie of works and self-righteousness, trusting in their own works and inherent goodness
 - And expecting God to accept them for who they are and even reward them and rather than judge them
 - It was that way for me
 - So here's the impossible task facing the writer
 - He must strive to reveal to these self-deceived Hebrews that
 - That it is possible for Jews to be among the faithful without actually being a man or woman of faith personally

- And secondly, that their Jewish ancestry history actually supports this possibility rather than protecting them against it
- The writer's proof runs from 3:7 to 4:13
 - It begins with the second warning
 - Transitions into exposition
 - And it ends with an exhortation
 - It can be complicated and difficult to follow, especially for a Gentile
 - Because it relies on a layering of multiple passages of OT scripture
 - Spanning about 400 years of Jewish history
 - And it challenges traditional Jewish teaching concerning
 - The faith of their ancestors who fled Egypt and wandered in the desert
 - The meaning of the term "God's rest"
 - The purpose and meaning of the Sabbath itself
 - It is in my opinion the second most impressive logical construct found in the New Testament epistles, second only to Romans 9-11
- The writer incorporates a proof from Psalms 95 in verse 7-11
 - Which retells Numbers 13 & 14
 - We need to understand the proof in depth
 - Then He states his premise or heart of the warning in verse 12
 - Then He makes his exhortation (call for a response) in 13-15
 - Then he gives the consequence in verse 16-19
- Notice several things
 - Also, he incorporates a proof from the OT and from their history into the proof

- Look for the substance of the warning
- The call to response, or exhortation
- The consequence of failing to heed the warning
- The warning is much more specific as to the offense and the consequence
- And then he continues on the discussion of that history as he transitions in chapter 4 into a new exposition

[Heb. 3:7](#) ¶ Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,

“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,

[Heb. 3:8](#) DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME,

AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS,

[Heb. 3:9](#) WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED *ME* BY TESTING *Me*,
AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.

[Heb. 3:10](#) “THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION,
AND SAID, ‘THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART,
AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS’;

[Heb. 3:11](#) AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH,
‘THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.’”

- The writer here is quoting from Psalms 95 (turn there)

[Psa. 95:7](#) For He is our God,
And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.
Today, if you would hear His voice,

[Psa. 95:8](#) Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,

[Psa. 95:9](#) “When your fathers tested Me,
They tried Me, though they had seen My work.

[Psa. 95:10](#) “For forty years I loathed *that* generation,
And said they are a people who err in their heart,
And they do not know My ways.

[Psa. 95:11](#) “Therefore I swore in My anger,
Truly they shall not enter into My rest.”

- The writer has invoked a powerful memory among his readers
 - Psalm 95 includes this comment spoken by God concerning a sad event in the history of Israel
 - The rebellion at Meribah and Massah
 - A time when Israel's forefathers tested God and were judged harshly for it
 - Here's what we need to in order to follow where the writer is about to go
 - First, we need to understand what God is saying in the statement recorded in Hebrews 3 and Psalm 95
 - And to do that, we will also need to return to Numbers 13&14 to understand exactly what happened in the time when God spoke these words to Moses
 - Secondly, we will need to then come back to Hebrews and understand how the writer makes use of this event in issuing his second warning
- The writer's quote of Psa 95 is so close to the original, that we can simply look at Psalm 95 itself
 - Verse 7&8
 - David says Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart
 - Three elements to David's call to the reader
 - Today, IF you hear His voice
 - As in hear it NOW (because you haven't yet)
 - Another way to say it is don't bet on your future
 - Don't assume that you will have another chance
 - Do the right thing now while you have an opportunity

- The reader is expected to hear and respond in some immediate way to the call David is making through this example
 - What does this kind of call remind you of?
- In verse 8 he goes on to give the example
 - Don't harden your hearts as in Meribah and Massah
 - To harden a heart is a serious thing
 - It's most classically connected to the Egyptians whose hearts God hardened so they could not free the Israelites until the appointed time for God's glory
 - It's deadening to God's word
 - A stubborn unshakable disobedience, which brings God just condemnation
 - The opposite of hearing God's voice is hardening your heart to God's call
 - And the writer points us to an example of those who didn't hear God's voice but rather hardened their hearts
- Before we turn to the story in Numbers, let's just skim through what else David says about that event
 - This was an event when Israel's fathers tested God
 - Meaning they put God to the test...they didn't take Him at His word but demanded proof and doubted His trustworthiness
 - They had seen God's works, but nevertheless God loathed them (hated)
 - They erred in their hearts
 - The word for err means deceived or led astray
 - So they had a deceived heart
 - And they do not know my ways

- These are tough words
 - If I described someone as a person who
 - Doesn't take God at His word even though they have seen God's works
 - Is someone who God loathes
 - Someone who has a deceived heart
 - And does not know God's ways
 - How would you summarize such a person?
- Remember what led the writer into this comparison?
 - His challenge to the readers that they could be confident of being a part of God's house (people) if they didn't give up on their hope
 - Now he's led them to an example of a people who did exactly the opposite
 - What exactly did they do?
 - Go to Numbers 13 & 14
- Verses 1-2; 17-21;
 - God led them here because he had promised them a land in which they could dwell securely and with great blessing
 - Moses reminded them of this promise only shortly before

[Num. 10:29](#) ¶ Then Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out to the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us and we will do you good, for the LORD has **promised** good concerning Israel."

- 13:25-14:12
 - They travel from South of the Negev to 100 miles north of the Galilee (50 miles north of present day Damascus)
 - The spies initially give this two-part report

- Good yes, but nevertheless...
- Caleb and Joshua interrupt to quickly say it doesn't matter who is living there because God can deal with them
 - They take God at His word
- But the other spies are so convinced that destruction lay ahead that they lied to create a false report (verse 13:32 – bad, dibbah = slanderous)
 - The people believe the false report and are prepared to kill Caleb and Joshua
 - They are ready to appoint a new leader (a rebellion) and return to Egypt
 - They don't trust God to keep His word
 - This is actually the tenth time they have tested God, and the tenth time was the last straw
 - God often uses the number 10 to signify the completion of judgment for iniquity
 - The Ten Plagues
 - The ten seal, trumpets, bowls
- God steps in to save the two but destroy the rest
 - Look at some of the things God says about these people
 - Verse 11: How long will they spurn me
 - The word for spurn means blaspheme or reject
 - How long we they not believe in Me?
 - In other words, they have yet to believe
 - Verse 22: not listened to my voice
 - Verse 23: not enter the promised land
 - Verse 33: their children will suffer for their unfaithfulness

- Verse 24: Caleb has a different spirit
- Verse 27: Evil generation
 - Followed fully
 - So he can enter
- God forbids them from entering but allows their children
 - They try to go anyway (more disobedience)
 - He allows them to perish under the sword
- Again, what are we seeing emphasized about this people
 - A group of people who not only didn't believe God's word here, but never believed God's word
 - What a perfect example of a group of people who followed after God in a literal way
 - But at some point they fell away (ten times)
 - And they made clear by their rebellion that they were not of God's house
 - Not His people
- What a stunning revelation to any Jew (and many Christians today)
 - The generation that left Egypt and followed Moses was not a generation that believed God nor followed Him with true hearts
 - They were rather examples of unbelievers living a false life under the banner of faith
 - They were exactly the kind of pretenders that the writer is worried may exist within the church in his day
 - Look at how the writer applies this stunning news to his argument

[Heb. 3:12](#) Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

[Heb. 3:13](#) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

[Heb. 3:14](#) For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

[Heb. 3:15](#) while it is said,

**“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,
DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME.”**

- Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil unbelieving heart that falls away
 - This is the heart of the warning
 - Notice that his command is that there not be in any one of you
 - No one within the group, collectively
 - How do they “take care?”
 - And how do they make sure that there is no one who is an unbeliever?
- He tells us in verse 13
 - Encourage one another as long as it is still called Today
 - I love this reference
 - He is referring again back to Psalm 95
 - How did David use the Term “Today...”
 - Meaning, make a decision to believe now
 - He’s compelling them to avoid the fate of the Israelites by not testing God any longer
 - Encourage one another to believe now
 - But he also adds a twist
 - As long as it is called “Today”
 - As long as the opportunity to know and believe the Gospel is still available
 - Before they die or before the window of the gospel closes

- The Israelites eventually hit the end of the line with the tenth test
 - The deceitfulness of our sin hardens us (as it did Pharaoh) against the call of the gospel (old people)
- Then in verse 14, he repeats his definition of the Christian and closes the inclusio
 - We have become partaker of Christ (Christians) if we hold fast
 - Not when we hold fast, but if
 - Not a means to the end, but a definition of our beginning
 - Then he adds a familiar phrase at the end in verse
 - While it is said
 - So long as the call goes out
 - While the call to faith remains
 - Hear God's voice
- To end the warning, the writer transitions to a discussions of the consequences of their unbelief

[Heb. 3:16](#) For who provoked *Him* when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt *led* by Moses?

[Heb. 3:17](#) And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

[Heb. 3:18](#) And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?

[Heb. 3:19](#) So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

- It's approached like a cross examination
 - Who provoked God in the desert?
 - Everyone who left Egypt (meaning the adults of course)
 - And who did He say he was angry with for forty years?
 - Those who sinned by their rebellion (the same group)
 - The same ones He left to die in the desert

- And who did God say could not enter His rest?
 - The same ones who were disobedient
- So their unbelief resulted in them not entering the promised land