

Good morning and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your bibles to Hebrews 3 as we continue our vbv study through this incredible book.

You'll recall that the Book of Hebrews was written to Christians who had come out of a Hebrew, or Jewish, culture. They were believers in Christ; they recognized Jesus as Messiah. But as the years went on, these Hebrew Christians were being lured back to religion, they were tempted to fall back into the religious rigors of Judaism instead of the simplicity of Christ.

SHOW PIC After all, there in Jerusalem they could see the temple. They could hear the trumpets. They could smell the incense. And the pull of tradition, nostalgia, and memories is a strong one. **CLOSE PIC**

Add on top of that the persecution these Hebrew Christians were facing, and you can see how it would be tempting to go back to the familiar.

And the author of Hebrews is saying "Don't go back to that which can't save. Keep it simple. It's Jesus—nothing more, nothing less, nothing else."

If you've been with us in our studies, you'll recall that in Chapters 1-2 we were shown that Jesus is better than the prophets, the Law, and angels. Now Chapter 3 explains how Jesus is better than perhaps the greatest hero in all of the OT, Jesus is greater than Moses.

Because chapter 3 talks so much about Moses, we should take a couple moments and remind ourselves of some important details about him.

Of course we recall when the Lord spoke to him

Exodus 3:2 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed.

" ah...no way!" in surprise. Then a voice replied," Ya way!"

And remember what happened on Mt Sinai as the Lord gave Moses the 10 commandments.

Exodus 32 15 And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. The tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written. 16 Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. 17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp." 18 But he said:

"It is not the noise of the shout of victory,
Nor the noise of the cry of defeat,
But the sound of singing I hear."

19 So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast

the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

Moses is the only man in his to break all ten commandments at once!

BTW, did you know that Moses had the first tablet that could connect to the cloud.

BTW, do you know how Moses made his coffee? Hebrews it!

Look chapter 3 is all about keeping our eyes on Jesus, and not wavering from our faith.

We're gonna study chapter 3 this morning, and the title of this mornings message is Avoiding a Hard Heart
Let's pray

SHOW PIC Keith Green was a popular Christian singer in the 1970s. Keith was formerly a hippie - a 60s flower child. Like his peers he searched for truth in eastern religion. Yet one day Keith had a thought.

Every guru he'd heard referenced a person named Jesus. All the exotic religions Keith studied tried to justify their teaching by drawing an association with Jesus.

It finally dawned on him, "Maybe I should just find out about Jesus." Keith purchased a Bible, and spent some time considering Jesus. It changed his life forever. **CLOSE PIC**

To experience the presence of God, a person must spend time with Jesus. As Hebrews 3:1 tells us

1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,

When we think of the word apostle we think of the 12 apostles right? But here it tells us Jesus is our Apostle. What does this mean?

The word apostle means sent one-it's describing someone that's an ambassador. Hey and Jesus is God the Father's ultimate ambassador. God sent a message of love and forgiveness that was so important that He sent it through Christ Jesus.

Of course Jesus is also our high priest. God cares for us so much that He put the perfect mediator, the ultimate High Priest, between Himself and sinful man.

But I want to draw your attention to that word in the middle of the verse, it's the word consider. To consider means to behold, and discover.

But amidst the chaos and frenetic culture we live in today, it's getting harder and harder to sit and consider Jesus isn't it?

Peter walked on water as long as his focus was on the Lord.

Matthew 14 25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw Him

walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous,[fn] he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

And today, the winds and waves of circumstance, the boisterousness of modern living - can steal away our vision of Jesus. Life can get so hectic and frenetic, we become blinded to what matters.

And you know what happens as a result? We can forget to consider Jesus.

But something extraordinary happens when we consider Jesus, when we prioritize Him in our lives.

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Verse 1 tells us, "consider Christ!"

1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,

Upon reading this, the mind of the Jewish reader would've immediately raced to Moses, the Apostle of Israel, the one sent to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt.

After baking bricks in the blistering Egyptian sun for four hundred years, the people of Israel cried to the Lord to send a deliverer. Sent by the Lord on a mission for the Lord, Moses was an apostle in the truest sense of the word.

And what was Moses to do? Exodus 8:1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me."

And you know what happens. This apostle, this leader, Moses, led a congregation of 2-3 million Jews out of Egypt.

Notice they are told to consider not only the apostle, but the High Priest of their profession. Who was the Hebrews high priest- it was Moses' older brother, Aaron.

Now when we get to chapter 5, the author of Hebrews reminds his audience that not only did Moses fail to enter the Promised Land but also that Aaron failed to enter in as well.

But our apostle and high priest Jesus Christ never fails does He?

2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. To whom is our High Priest faithful? Jesus is faithful to the One who appointed Him. He is faithful to the Father.

John 17:23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

How much does Jesus love us? As much as God loves His Son Jesus. Isn't that wonderful? When we really consider, when we behold, when we discover that the Father loves us as much as He loves His own Son, we pray with confidence. We're at peace in our hearts. We worship more—not to earn spiritual brownie points, but just to enjoy our Father.

See Moses failed to enter the promised land. Aaron failed to enter the promised land. But our Apostle and High Priest, Jesus Christ, will not fail—no matter how many times we do—because His ministry is to the Father.

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. Moses was a hero with no peers. Moses wasn't perfect, but he humbly and faithfully led Israel for 40 years.

Think about Moses' resume. He spoke to God from a bush that burned yet wasn't consumed. Moses wielded miraculous power and parted the Sea. He humbled a tyrannical Pharaoh and mighty

Egypt. Moses delivered God's law to His people and the world. God's Law is forever called "The Law of Moses."

Moses sculpted a band of former slaves into a nation and fighting army. He struck a rock and out came water. Moses was so revered by His people, Deut 34 tells us when he died the angel Michael buried him in a hidden grave so no one would be tempted to worship his dead bones.

Moses was an incredible Godly man.

SHOW PIC Years ago, Israeli general Ariel Sharon and George Bush were scheduled for a meeting. Sharon was late and Bush was upset. Sharon told him, "Mr. President, I'm sorry, but I was talking to someone more important than you." **SHOW PIC** Bush was thinking, "How dare him! Who could be more important than the American President?" Sharon told him, "I was talking to Moses."

Bush was impressed. He said, "Can I talk to Moses?" Sharon pulled out his cell phone, punched in a number, and whispered... Finally, he turns to George W. and says, "Mr. President, I'm sorry, but Moses said he doesn't want to talk to you... The last time he talked to a Bush it cost him forty years in the wilderness." **CLOSE PIC**

It's true Moses is more important than any American President, but in verse 3 the writer of Hebrews assures us that Moses pales in significance to the King of kings. **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.

Moses showed an amazing faithfulness in his ministry; but Jesus showed a perfect faithfulness — surpassing even that of Moses.

In the construction of “the house (or nation) of Israel” Moses was a tool in God’s hand. But Jesus is the builder! Jesus is the Divine Contractor. In **Matthew 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**

4 For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And notice the implication in v4- if God builds all things, and Jesus builds the Church, then Jesus must be God. It’s a powerful proof-text for the deity of Christ. Moses was just a hammer in God’s toolbox, Jesus is the builder of God’s house - a member of the Godhead.

6-6

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, Pause here. Moses was a faithful servant, but he was never called a Son in the way Jesus is. This shows that Jesus is greater than Moses.

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.^[fn]

We become part of God's household through faith in Christ. Christ makes our salvation secure, but that salvation comes with a solemn responsibility to hold firm, to persevere. **John 8:31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed."**

I want to be clear-we are not saved by being steadfast and firm in our faith.

Holding fast the confidence and the rejoicing of our hope will reveal itself as fruit in our lives. Without this enduring faithfulness, we could easily be blown away by the winds of temptation or false teaching.

And to illustrate this need for perseverance, the writer of Hebrews reminds us of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. See the ancient Jews began well, but they ended poorly because they didn't continue in their faith.

And look as we go through this we can't just look at this as history, this has enormous application to us. Because we will never experience God's rest if we have hardened hearts or lack of faith.

7-9

(Ps. 95:7–11)

7 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. Rather than trust God, the
Hebrews who exited Egypt refused to take God at His word. They
kept insisting God do something to prove Himself.

You'd think turning the Nile to blood, or parting the Red Sea
would've sealed their allegiance, but miracles alone don't produce
faith!

More often than not, all miracles create a desire for more
miracles. How does faith grow? **Romans 10:17 So then faith
comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

Notice V8 refers to the Israelites who had "hardened" their hearts.
SHOW PIC A hardened heart is like when clay becomes hard, a
loaf of bread becomes rock hard. Nothing can restore it and
make it useful. **CLOSE PIC** "Do not harden your hearts" means
"do not rebel and persist in your stubbornness."

This is what you see in the OT. even after God delivered them,
the Hebrews lost their faith in the Lord to care and provide for
them.

This doesn't happen suddenly or all at once; it's the result of a
series of choices to disregard God's will.

Here's God's response to their hardened hearts

10 Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, 'They always go astray in their heart,
And they have not known My ways.' The Hebrews Moses led out of Egypt were acquainted with God's works. For forty years on a daily basis they ate the miracle manna, but they never learned and obeyed God's ways.

See just looking for God's works, without listening to His words and living God's way will sentence a person to perpetual restlessness. You'll spend your life wandering in a spiritual desert until you humble your heart and submit to God's ways.

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

God grew angry because the people went astray in their heart.

To be clear God hates sin, but God is also love. **Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

But God's perfect moral nature means He cannot ignore or condone willful rebellion.

We can't forget that God's love is as real as His wrath, and it's important that we don't twist the scriptures to overstate one in favor of the other.

12-13 brings the warnings to home to the audience and to us.

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. **SHOW PIC** Guardrails are important. They help you if you start to get off track. And one of the guardrails God has provided Christians from turning away from God is other Christians! **CLOSE PIC**

Part of our responsibilities as Christians is to encourage and exhort one another to stay focused on Christ.

These verses remind us that we cannot encourage or be encouraged apart from fellowship with others. This is why it’s important to be part of a church body. We’re never called to live as Christians in a vacuum. We need fellowship with others.

SHOW PIC You know if I handed you a bundle of sticks and told you to break them in half, there’s only one way you’d be able to do it. You have to take each stick out individually to do it. **CLOSE PIC**

14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, Notice this is an “if” statement. It’s conditional. You and I will be partakers of Christ and the blessings He brings “if” we cross the finish line with our faith intact.

Faith is a journey, not just a state of mind. Christians should be able to say with Paul: **2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** We need to be “steadfast to the end.”

Jewish readers of this book of Hebrews would understand this picture of faith because it was the actual experience of the generation that had fled Egypt in the Exodus. Because of unfaithfulness and rebellion, the Israelites had lost God's blessings.

15 while it is said:

"Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."^[fn] We often say our hearts become hard because of what others or circumstances do to us. But the fact is that we harden our own hearts in response to what happens to us.

Most of the time we have very little control of our circumstances. But we can decide and control if our circumstances drive us toward Jesus, or away from Jesus.

16-19

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. Why couldn't they enter the promised land? It wasn't because of their sin. It wasn't because of any reason other than unbelief.

The danger for us is that a hardened heart can dull our ability to perceive and understand. Anyone's heart can harden, even

faithful Christians'. In fact, in Mark 8 we see Jesus' own disciples suffering from this.

Mark 8:13 And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. 14 Now the disciples^[fn] had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. 15 Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." 16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread." 17 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still^[fn] hardened? 18 Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." 20 "Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" And they said, "Seven." 21 So He said to them, "How is it you do not understand?"

Similar to the disciples in this instance or the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, when a new calamity arises in our lives, our hearts often fill with fear and concern instead of faith and confidence in God.

Sadly, this simply reveals to God the little faith we have in His promise to take care of us **Philippians 4:19 And my God shall**

supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.