

Hebrews 3:6-19

“Stay The Course”

This morning we’re going to want to jump right in to this predicament, this principle that left us sorta hanging last week as our time came to a close. This idea of really showing our sonship, or verifying, that is ratifying the fact that we’re the household of God, “if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” Remember there in Vs 6? The comparisons & the contrasts were being made regarding Moses & Jesus. Both called of God, both appointed by God, both were deliverers, both spoke God’s Word to the people, both were faithful regarding God’s house. But as to where Moses may’ve been a *servant in* the house, Christ is the *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.*” & We were just sort left hanging there w/regard to, “What does that mean, ‘hold fast to the end?’”

Now, 1st of all I suppose we should recognize the point of reference when we’re speaking of, “the confidence & the rejoicing of the hope.” What is, “The confidence” that he’s speaking of. Well, I’ll just say it, he’s speaking of the confidence placed in Christ for the forgiveness of sin & being found acceptable in the sight of the Father. He’s speaking of “Christ confidence” Jesus is our confidence before the Father. **We’re confident of His atoning work on the cross, the fact that though He was w/out sin He became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God through faith in Him. Hebrews is written to a group of people who though they’d come to Christ, had believed in Christ, they were contemplating a return to the Mosaic rituals & rites of the law. & The exhortation here is to maintain “Christ confidence,” & the “rejoicing of the hope.”** Which is really simply a way of underscoring the same thing, saying the same thing in a different way for the sake of emphasis; we realize as we’ve stated before that biblical “hope” is not wishful thinking. “I *hope* the playground is done soon,” or “I *hope* the church kitchen is ready to use in the not too distant future.” **Well, it may be, it may not be, I can’t be certain but I *hope* so. That’s not scriptural hope, when you read of *hope* in the bible it’s a reference to a *guaranteed certainty, a concrete reality, an assured expectation, & an unquestionable anticipation.* There’s no question marks regarding biblical hope, it’s a matter of fact.** So that when you read words like, “...*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” Col 1:27 It’s not a matter of question or wishful thinking. It’s saying that Christ in you is the guaranteed certainty, the assured expectation & the unquestionable anticipation of glory. So when the writer of Hebrews says that we’re to, “holdfast the confidence & the rejoicing of the hope,” he’s saying no matter what you do don’t take your eyes of Christ. **Don’t place your trust, your confidence, your faith in any *one* any *thing* or any other system or set of rules & regulations. You lean *on*, draw *from*, & trust *in*, that is keep confidence in Christ *exclusively* for your salvation & your sanctification before the Father. Your relationship w/God is mediated through Christ alone.**

You are the house *of Christ*, if you holdfast *to* Christ (basically) firm to the end.” “To the end?” Yeah, listen, true commitment is demonstrated over the long term, not just the initial burst. We’ve said it before, Jesus never said, “Well begun” He said, “Well *done* good & faithful servant.” **How we begin can be critical, but it’s not nearly as critical in its nature compared to how we end. You remember there in Mark Ch 4 when Jesus was speaking on the parable of the soils. & He likened the various soils of the earth to the human heart. & He likened the seed sown on it to the Word of God. & He said some of the seed as its sown fell by the way side.**

The birds of the air simply snatched up. That's like hearing the word of God & the enemy comes in & removes it just as fast as it hits, it does no good, you're non-receptive. Some fell on stony ground, it looked good on top but had a rocky shelf underneath, the seed couldn't root so when the heat of the day was upon it, it withered & died. Some people receive the word initially but when tough times & trials come upon them, they abandon ship. **Other seed landed on what seemed to be good ground because the seed grew, but the ground grew weeds, & thorns that entered in & choked the life out of it. That's like unto people who hear the word, receive the word, but the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches & the desire for other things enter in, choke it out, priority is placed on the things of this world & there's no fruitful yield.** But some seed lands on good ground & it bears fruit some 30, some 60, some 100 fold, it matures, comes to full fruition, is able to be reaped & brought into the store house. There's an endurance to the desired *end*. So there are different responses, some do nothing, some respond initially, some get choked out eventually, & others go the distance completely, they holdfast to the end.

Don't enter into your walk w/Christ thinking it's like a 100yd dash. It's the 26.2 mile marathon, & how many people come out of "the gates" w/that initial burst & man they look good. But how few comparatively actually go the distance? That's what he's going to challenge them w/at this point, you've got to go the distance.

& It's not that going the distance saves you, it's that because you're saved you go the distance. Now, this is where the ancient debate of, "Once saved always saved" or "free will choice" comes into play. Which is it? I'll just tell you that either position can be vehemently defended via the scriptures. & I believe there's a reason for that, God wants you to know you're eternally secure as long as you abide in Christ. **He wants you to know that should you sin, if you confess your sin, you repent of your sin, He's faithful & just to forgive your sin & cleanse you of all unrighteousness. Yet He also wants you to realize the inherent (even eternal) danger there is in flirting w/sin, don't think you can do what you want, whenever you want & there not be consequences to the choices you've made.**

& As I said this is where people will part ways theologically, but regardless of your position we can all come together in the fact that the bible calls us to abide in Christ. You abide in Christ (John 15) you're eternally secure. Jesus said if you don't abide in Me, then even as a branch that doesn't abide in the vine, it's cut off & thrown in the fire. **Cut the stream from the fountain, and it dries up; cut the branch from the tree, it withers & dies; detach the planet from the sun, and it rushes into darkness and ruin; separate the soul from God, its fountain, root, sun - - and it's destined to destruction. Don't flirt around w/how much can you sin & still have salvation, you resolve in your heart that till death do you part from this world you're going to cling desperately to Christ. You're going to abide *in* Him, draw near *to* Him, walk closely w/Him.**

Vs 7-11

There's obviously a # of things in view here as the writer calls on the "Exodus experience" for his case in point regarding the need to trust *in* & depend *on* the promises of God. But we want to note that right from the beginning in Vs 7 we need to realize & recognize the scripture as the inspired & inerrant Word of God. **"As the Holy Spirit says," & then he begins to quote Ps 95 which David receives credit for (as far as a human instrument is concerned) in the next Ch (Heb 4:7). But in reality its author is the Holy Spirit as is true of all the scriptures. Different human instruments, same author.**

The bible says, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” ^{2 Tim 3:16-17} So the entirety of scripture is inspired of God, more literally “God breathed.” Peter said that holy men of God spoke as they were “moved by the Holy Spirit.”

So as the Holy Spirit says, “Today if you will hear His voice.” You guys there’s just so much here, “If you will hear His voice.” Who’s voice? God’s voice; the Sovereign, Almighty, Creator God of the universe asks for our attention, our affection, our obedience, He asks for your heart, for your soul, for the entirety of who you are, but here’s the deal not by constraint. Not by guilt, not by force; it’s up to you, it’s up to me personally, individually to decide whether or not I’m going to “give ear” to God. If you *will*, now that appeals to your freedom of choice, your own will. Hey, God is speaking, He’s crying out through the work of the cross that we be reconciled to Him through faith in J.C. The question is, are you willing to hear it? Hearing Him, responding to Him isn’t a matter of whether or not I’m *able*, it’s whether or not I’m *willing*.

& I want you to note the sense of urgency in this appeal. When should I hear Him, when should I give ear to Him, responding positively *to* Him? “Today.” There’s no room here for procrastination, no room for putting off, no room for “perhaps tomorrow. No! It’s *today*, right here, right now, in this moment. We as people are so good at putting things off till another time, a more convenient opportunity. I received a pamphlet one time on procrastination & when I opened it the pages were empty (true story), I guess whoever was responsible for printing decided they’d check the machine later. It’s always easier to put things off for a more convenient time. But here’s the deal, there are no guarantees for another opportunity, you have right now to respond *to* & receive the word of God. Will you have later? Perhaps, perhaps not, you have right now. & You’re here, you’re listening, the question is are you really hearing what God is seeking to speak to your heart regarding your commitment to Christ; or are you sort of sitting here, the lights are on but you’re not home? Not really paying attention, not really taking to heart, instead of opening your heart, you’re hardening your heart, resisting the Spirit, not really receiving what the Spirit has for you? You see the appeal is that if you’ll hear it, don’t harden your heart against it; as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, & saw God’s works 40 yrs.

Now specifically this is a reference to Ex 17 when after the nation of Israel was delivered from Egypt they came to a place called Rephidim. & There was no water to drink, & so the people contended w/Moses. “Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us & our children, & our livestock w/thirst?” Of course God provided for them, but Moses called that place Massah, & Meribah which means, “temptation,” & “contention” because there the people tempted & tried the Lord which is what’s being alluded to here in Vs 9 where God says, “They tested & tried Me.” They didn’t trust *in* or depend *on*, they tempted the Lord, didn’t believe the Lord. & So the warning is being made about a lack of trusting in God’s ability to do what He’s said He’ll do. For you & me & the Hebrew reader of this letter in that day, the parallel is made in that they didn’t trust God’s ability to deliver them & take care of them though He said He would. God has made a promise of deliverance & provision for you & me in Christ. Do we trust Him for it? Have confidence in Him regarding it? Or do you believe that He’s brought this far but is unable to seal the deal? The general reference here is to the nation of Israel not entering in to the Promised Land so they were sentenced to a 40 death march till that entire generation died off who refused to believe God for His promise.

There they were at Kadesh Barnea, & the 1st symptom of unbelief was readily apparent when they wanted to send spies into the land. Why check it out? God had promised it to them, it didn't matter what it looked like (though it was beautiful) or who was in it or how fierce they were because God promised to give them that land. But they didn't trust the Lord for it, went in & spied it out for 40 days. As you know 12 spies went in, only 2 of which (Joshua & Caleb) returned w/a good report, the majority rule was wrong (& it generally is). **But the 10 convinced the people that there was no way they could take the land. Now, they'd seen the plagues of Egypt, God's deliverance, the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night. Miraculous intervention after miraculous intervention & yet for all that they didn't trust the Lord, they tried the Lord.** (Which by the way only goes to show the miracles don't produce faith, they produce fascination & a desire to see more, but they don't produce faith, faith comes by *hearing* (today if you will hear His voice) the Word of God). But they didn't trust God to take them into the land, in essence by default called God a liar & said they didn't believe that He was able to keep His word.

Vs10

What's the warning? Beware of the danger of skepticism; see the peril in putting off repentance, in not responding to the Word & the ways of God. If you harden yourself against God, if I harden myself against God there may well come a time when He hardens Himself against me, against you. It's thin ice, dangerous territory, not worth the risk, there's no profit in it nor benefit from it. "They always go astray (notice) *in their heart.*" At the heart of every problem is a problem of the heart. God is always searching, seeking, appealing to & dealing w/the heart. & The heart of man is wicked. The bible says, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.*" Jer 17:9-10 **God knows when we draw near to Him w/our mouths, & honor Him w/our lips but our heart is far from Him. We can say the right things, even put on the appearance of doing the right things, meanwhile we're astray in our heart, we're not true to His ways in our heart.**

& You see part of the warning here is that if there was a responsibility to trust the lead, follow the word & the ways of God's servant Moses, how much more is there a responsibility to trust the lead, follow the word & the ways of God's *Son* Jesus? Another application? Moses was faithful in God's house, Jesus was faithful being over God's house, now to you & me goes the exhortation, be faithful to the Lord, His word, His ways. Those who came out of Egypt weren't.

Vs11-12

What a strong warning. Beware believer, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. We've spoken of the danger of doubting, this is the danger of disbelief, unbelief. Not trusting God's promise & provision for your life in Christ. Now when we're speaking of departing from the living God, is this a reference to losing one's salvation? I personally don't see that contextually. If you press me in a corner I'll tell you that I'm one who is of the persuasion that you can cease abiding in Christ & willingly forfeit your security in Him. However I don't see that here, you have to remember 1st of all that even though they didn't make it in to the Promised Land, God never left them, He never forsook them, He didn't allow them to retreat to Egypt for His Name's sake because of His mercy. **The Promised Land is not a picture of Heaven, it's a picture of the life led in the Spirit. In the Promised Land there were struggles, sorrows, battles, even defeats, none of which are present in Heaven.**

The Promised Land is that place whereby you can enter into all that God has for you by trusting Him to go before you, fight your battles for you & cause you to walk in victory in your Christian life here on this earth. I don't believe that the entire nation of Israel that didn't believe God for the Promised Land went to hell. They simply forfeited the blessings, the victory, & the fullness of abundant life that God had for them here & lived their lives in relative misery as the result. & There are Christians today who live in misery, defeated, worried, stressed & all the time struggling w/one thing or another because they simply don't believe God for His word. They're saved, they trusted God for their initial deliverance, they've "crossed through the Red Sea" yet when they came to the Jordan & that next phase of growth & development was set before them. Now God wasn't going to part the sea in front of them, they were going to have to step out in faith, & they look at the situation, they see difficulties, dilemmas, & rather than *depend* on the Lord, their heart *departs from* the Lord & they don't enter in. **The result is no rest, they have peace *with* God, but they don't know the peace *of* God because they just can't trust God for the promise of His word, they don't know His ways, & can't believe Him for His provision in His Son.**

You see unbelief is a wicked & miserable sin, what is unbelief? It's not a matter of intelligence, it's not an inability to understand, it's an *unwillingness to trust*. Now I'm not talking about doubt, that hits us all occasionally. There's a sense in which we all will come to a place where we say, "Lord I believe, help my unbelief" Jesus will meet you there, in the integrity of your heart. **But unbelief isn't a weakness of faith, it sets itself in opposition to faith. It insults the integrity of God & says, "I don't think I can trust You." "I want to believe God I just can't." So God's a liar, that's what you're saying? It's more accurate to say, "I just won't, I'm more interested in my sin than I am Him or His forgiveness."** That's honest, but don't try to rationalize or justify your position, you can trust the Lord, it's simply a matter of whether or not your willing. You'll find that when your ready to repent of whatever sin you're hanging on to, your problems believing God will conveniently dissolve.

Vs13

Man that's a powerful, profound & insightful way of recognizing the nature of sin isn't it. "The deceitfulness of sin." We spoke a bit about this Wednesday evening, there's something so deceitful, so destructive, so twisted about the nature of sin that it actually convinces people that God is a bondage *bringer*, when in reality God is a bondage *breaker*. Wanting freed from the bonds of the Lord is like wanting your brake lines cut on your car so that you can move about uninhibited because you don't like being held back. But that's not freedom, its suicide, that's the deceitfulness of sin. How many times have you followed the wicked dictates of your heart thinking there was something you wanted & were willing to pay the price for because you knew it was sin, & then when you got it you felt completely ripped off? **That's the deceitfulness of sin, it seemed so alluring, tasted so good, then the hook was set. There's a reason you fish w/bait on a hook, because you want that fish to be drawn in & enticed, but its death to him. That's the way Satan baits you w/sin, through deceitfulness, but its death to you. Don't be ignorant of your enemy's devices. Sin will harden you against the Lord, now the specific sin in view here is "unbelief."** (Though the application goes across the board). & Unbelief is very subtle in its deceit, because it's not as though you don't believe *anything*, you continue to believe, but since you don't believe the truth you're given to believe a lie. If you don't believe the truth, you believe a lie, there's no alternative.

Now, sin will harden you against the Lord, His word, His will, His ways, how can I avoid the ruin of unbelief & be strengthened in my faith, my fortitude in the Lord? Notice, by exhorting, & being exhorted by my brothers & sisters in Christ. Now this is a real problem for those who avoid fellowship, don't come to church or think they need to come to church in order to be a "good Christian." (Which according to a statistic taken a few yrs ago is about 78% of the public & 70% of those who go to church.) **Hey, if I'm not connected to the body of Christ w/regularity or consistency how can I exhort or be exhorted to trust in the Lord lest I be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin? The one who isolates himself seeks his own desire (that's what the bible says) rages against all wise judgment.** You see the command here isn't to exhort (or strongly encourage) one another annually, occasionally, on holidays, monthly or even weekly, it's *daily*. Now how can that happen if I'm not around or connected to the body? You see the person who says, "Hey man it's a *personal* relationship, me & Jesus got this all worked out." Well, that's a person that though they may go to heaven will miss out on a significant chunk of blessing & benefit that God has for them here on this earth. **I don't know why but there are certain things that God has ordained whereby He will only work them into & through our lives via the body of Christ. Through your brothers & sisters in the Lord. & So again the appeal goes out to encourage one another, exhort one another to trust in the Lord, not to depart from the Lord, today, right here, right now, believe in Him, hang on to Him, He'll see you through.**
Vs14-15

He underscores it again, "You need to go the distance, resolve in your heart that you're on for the long haul." The Christian who takes it "day by day," is setting himself/herself up for a fall. You belong to Christ till the end, period, know that, resolve that in your heart. You see this isn't a fatalistic plea, "If you're saved you'll make it, if not maybe you were never really saved." **God is using these warnings, these appeals to our will as a means whereby He's seeking to build endurance in you & me. But we can't be in a neutral place, we have 2 choices, if we don't respond it makes for a hardened resolve, makes it easier to not respond the next time. Or I can open my heart, soften my heart to the *appeal* of God, purpose in my heart to trust the *Word* of God. But I can't take a neutral position.**

Vs16-19

Unbelief will bring God's reproach upon your life, upon my life. Hey when those guys came up out of Egypt we'd have put our money on them wouldn't we? Saved by the blood of the Lamb, miracles happening, the Sea parted, they all went through on dry ground, God was going before them, man there was no stopping them. But what was meant to be an 11 day journey, turned into a 40 yr death march, millions fell in the wilderness being unable to enter the Promised Land because of unbelief. **They refused to trust the Lord, they had an initial experience w/the Lord that was incredible, & they allowed God to take them to a certain point as long as they were spoon fed. But when it came to them trusting God, taking His word at face value w/out all the flash & flare to go before it, they came to a raging halt & never entered in to the fullness of what God had for them.** Beginning well is one thing, finishing well is something altogether different, stay the course, hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

Perhaps you've slipped from that place, re-establish your footing today, while it's called today, right here, right now, repent of your sin, return to the Lord. Maybe you've never entered into that walk w/the Lord, the call goes out to you, while it's called "Today" if you'll hear His voice, don't harden your heart, don't rebel, receive J.C. Let Him forgive you of your sin, & give to you new life.

Prayer Points:

God may we respond to Your voice, right here, right now, in this very moment. Repentance, renewal, restoration, revival, whatever the need of each heart may be, may we not resist your word, the work of Your Spirit, help us that we not harden ourselves against You, but open ourselves to You. Have your way in this body collectively & in our lives individually for Your glory, & Your Name's sake.

Today if you'll hear His voice, if you'll respond to His knocking on the door of your heart, & you'll open the door & let Christ into your heart, into your life, then let me encourage you to do that even now. Just open your heart to Jesus, tell Him you want Him to Have His will done, His way, in Your life, & you'll never be the same...in Jesus name.