

## Warnings

### *Unbelief*

Hebrews 3:7-19

April 19, 2026 am

HDBC

Warnings are designed to protect. They are meant to keep us from being misled, injured, harmed or even killed. Sometimes they are meant to keep us from hurting someone else or damaging equipment. They are a necessary part of life. **And they come in a variety of ways.**

**Signs:** Landmines in Golan Heights. Alligators in Florida.

**Labels:** Cleaning supplies (do not ingest). Clothing (dry clean only)

**Sounds/Signals:** Cars (collision, overheat), security cameras.

**Verbal:** Teacher warns about a test. Parents warn about obedience.

Then there are the warnings found in the Bible. The Bible is not primarily a negative book. It is the positive story of redemption, grace, mercy and forgiveness. **It ends on the highest of notes, with a description of Heaven.** But within its pages there are occasional warnings. Five of those are found in the book of Hebrews.

These five, like all warnings in the Bible are **evidence of God's mercy.** The OT tells us that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11). The NT tells us that He does not wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. Throughout his Word He warns of the dangers and penalties of sin. Today we will consider the second warning in Hebrews. It is the warning of ***Unbelief***. It is found in Hebrews 3:7-19

This warning is written to those who know the gospel, but for one reason or another have not made a faith commitment to Christ. They have a knowledge of Jesus but have not taken the step of faith to follow Him.

**Like the child on the diving board whose dad is in the water inviting him to jump in. Child wants to jump but hesitates. Dad is inviting and assuring.**

Or better yet, like the person in the burning building with the fireman just outside the window on the ladder, encouraging him to step out to safety. The fireman assures her that she will be safe, but it still takes faith.

Many people are like that when it comes to their eternal salvation. They know the truth but have not said **yes**. Hesitating to take the step of faith.

**There is** an important thing to note here about faith. We all have faith and use faith throughout the course of an average day. But not all faith is the same. There is a level of faith that is **instinctive and involuntary**. When you **order food at a restaurant** you instinctively trust that it is safe. When you **take medicine** you instinctively believe that it is safe. These are acts of faith, but are far from the kind of faith that saves.

**We might** even take that to another level and include a kind of faith that is **deliberate and conscious, but still falls short of saving faith**. You might believe that Jesus was a real person. You might believe the Bible is true. You might even believe that Jesus was in some way the son of God. You are choosing to believe these things. But this alone, is not saving faith.

**Saving faith** involves more than intellectual agreement. It involves a conscious commitment to Jesus, that involves repentance over sin and is based on the belief that Jesus is the son of God and will forgive your sins, make you right with God and ultimately bring you to heaven when you die.

**I can say that I believe** a bungee cord **will keep me from crashing on the ground below, but I can only truly demonstrate that faith by jumping.**

**I can say I believe surgery will save my life, but unless I'm willing to have the surgery, I have not acted in faith.**

I believe Jesus is the Son of God and I've made a faith commitment to Him. This is not something I did in private. I made a public profession of my faith in Jesus and announced it to the world through baptism. **This is a warning against unbelief that keeps you from taking that step of faith.**

**Note three things.** We'll read the text with each thing we note.

### 1. **The Example (7-11)**

The writer takes us back to one of the great moments in Israel's history. It is the story of the deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

**It started so well, with great expectations, yet ended so poorly.**

On that memorable night, as the Hebrews were safely in their homes, protected by the blood around their doors, the destroyer came through and killed the firstborn among all the Egyptians. Pharaoh called for Moses, demanding that the Hebrews leave. As the dawn broke the great migration of a million+ people, along with their livestock began an epic journey into freedom.

They witnessed the parting of the Red Sea delivering them from the Egyptian army. They were guided by a special cloud by day and fire by night, leading them in the right direction. Both were reminders that God was with them, protecting, guiding, loving.

It was a fabulous beginning. But it did not end well. Of all the adults who left Egypt only two ultimately entered into the promised land. All others died in the wilderness. The writer of Hebrews gives us of the reason why. Quoting Psalm 95. They got right to border and balked, refusing to enter in. Why? Unbelief! They failed to trust God. Cost them dearly

**The writer's point? Don't be like them! Learn from their mistake.**

**Today** (7) Indicates urgency. Right now. Don't wait! Too many things could happen that would not be good. This refers not so much to a 24-hour period of time, but to the present moment. If you know the truth, act now. Testimony from evangelist, **D.L. Moody.**

**In his earlier revivals he would often end his messages by telling the people to go home and think about what he had said. One night in Chicago he told the people to do that and to come back the next night ready to make a decision. That night the Chicago fire broke out and**

some who would have been back that next night died. He then determined to never again ask people to wait.

**Israel had been** in Egypt for more than 400 years. God sent Moses to lead them to freedom. Once out of Egypt and in the wilderness they went through some experiences which tested their faith. On many of those occasions they failed. **The most important of those was when they refused to trust God enough to enter the promised land.** The result was 40 years of wandering in the wilderness outside of God's best.

Numbers 14 recounts the story. 10 of the 12 spies who were sent into the land brought back a negative report that filled the people with fear. They grumbled against Moses and God (2) saying, ***Would that we had died in Egypt or this wilderness.*** God heard that request and granted it. Later in the chapter we read the words of God to Moses (28-29). ***Say to them, As I live says the Lord, just as you have spoken in my hearing, so I will surely do to you; your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.***

Be careful what you ask God for. God gave them their desire and they died in the wilderness. They knew the truth about God, but made a willful decision to say no! **Knowledge alone will not overpower unbelief. It takes repentance and faith in the form of personal surrender** to do that.

**Because of** their unbelief they did not enter into His rest. **Rest** to them, was the land of Canaan. There they would set down roots. Their nomadic lifestyle would come to an end. **Rest** to us does not refer to being in a particular land but **to being in Christ, being saved.**

That's the past example which we are to learn from. Now to . . .

## 2. The Appeal (12-14)

After taking us back in time to witness the failure of the Hebrews under Moses, the writer appeals us to be different. We look to the past not simply to know what they did, but to learn from their example. There is a negative and positive aspect to this challenge.

**The negative:** Avoid making the same mistake made by the Israelites.  
**Don't be like them! Trust God and be saved.**

**Brethren** refers not to believers, but to Jews. The danger is having **an evil, unbelieving heart**, which could not be present in a true believer. The danger is unbelief and it is located in one's heart. This unbelief is what will keep a person from being right with living God.

**The greatest sin in the world is unbelief.** It is the greatest offense against God. Turning away from Jesus is not rejecting religion but a relationship with the God.

**The positive:** Encourage those unbelievers around you to make a faith commitment to Jesus.

**Encourage** means to **come alongside in order to give aid**. The writer is challenging the hearers to help one another. They especially needed to help their unbelieving friends to come on and make that commitment to Jesus. We have a responsibility to one another. We are to look beyond ourselves and to make the effort to help those around us.

## 3. The Warning (15-19)

The writer once again takes us back to the Hebrews in the wilderness under Moses. They hardened their hearts and in doing so **provoked God** with their unbelief. It amounted to **contempt** for God. Even though they saw the **cloud by day and fire by night**; even though they ate the **manna in the morning** and had **meat in the evenings**; even though God provided **water from a rock** and **protection from enemies**, they refused to trust him enough to enter the land.

**What was the result** of their unbelief? Judgment from God. They were not able to enter the promised land. His point is that the same rejection of faith that kept them out of the promised land will keep unbelievers out of Heaven. **The writer presents of series of questions and answers to provide further enlightenment.**

**Question (16):** Who were the ones who heard and rebelled?

**Answer:** The ones who came of Egypt with Moses

**Point:** They had some faith, but not saving faith.

**Question (17):** With whom was God angry for 40 years?

**Answer:** With the ones who sinned and died in wilderness

**Point:** They fell under His wrath because of unbelief.

**Question (18):** Whom did God promise would not enter His rest?

**Answer:** Those who were disobedient by not trusting Him.

**Point:** Unbelief kept them in a state of disobedience and lostness.

Some of you have sensed the call of God to trust Him.

**Sermons at church. Lying awake. Life crushing blow. Buried a loved one.**

You've sensed time and time again that trusting Jesus was right and good. Yet you've managed to push those thoughts into the background. Yet once more, the Lord is gracious, giving you yet another opportunity. One day those opportunities will cease and you will die in the wilderness.

Reminds me of a poem written by **Lucille Clifton. It's a poem in which she pictures herself trying to keep her eyes closed, ignoring the truth, blocking it out.** But then she finishes the poem with a voice telling her,

***You might as well answer the door my child, the truth is furiously knocking.***

***The truth of the Gospel is furiously but graciously knocking.***

***Will you open the door?***