

North Summit Church
Hebrews 3:7-19
Today, If You Hear His Voice

Introduction

Series Recap:

We're continuing our journey through Hebrews: Encountering the Supremacy of Christ.

- In Chapter 1, we saw that in Christ, God has spoken His final word—the complete revelation of who He is and what He's like. Jesus isn't just superior to previous revelation; He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact imprint of His nature.
- In Chapter 2 we encountered the author's first warning about spiritual drift. We saw that Jesus secures us from spiritual drift and pioneers our path to glory through His perfect identification with humanity. He is both our anchor and our brother—fully God yet fully human, able to sympathize with our weakness while leading us safely home.
- Today we're going to examine this 2nd warning passage carefully. The author is going to show us what spiritual drift looks like when it hardens into something more dangerous.

Review: Christ Over Moses's House (vv. 5-6)

Before we dive into the warning itself, we need to remember the context the author has established. Let me read verses 5-6:

Hebrews 3:5-6

"Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope."

Servant vs. Son Contrast

- The author has been comparing Christ to Moses—the greatest figure in Jewish history. Moses spoke with God face to face. Moses delivered Israel from Egypt. Moses gave them the Law. To question Moses's greatness would have been unthinkable to a Jewish audience.

"Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant"

- This isn't a lowly slave; this is a position of respect. Moses served in the house, but he didn't own it.

"to testify to the things that were to be spoken later"

- This is crucial. Moses's role was to point forward. His entire ministry was bearing witness to something greater that would come. The Law, the tabernacle, the sacrifices...all of it was pointing to a future reality.

"but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son"

- Here the author is pointing out the contrast:
 - Moses was in the house; Christ is over the house
 - Moses was a servant; Christ is the Son
 - Moses testified to things to come; Christ is the fulfillment
- The Son owns the house. The Son has authority over the house. The Son is the one Moses pointed toward.

"And we are his house"

- What!? We are not just living in God's house. We are God's house. We are the dwelling place of God's Spirit. We are the temple being built up as living stones.

"if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope"

- **Hold fast our confidence:** This is bold assurance, resting in the finished work of Christ, the confidence to approach the throne of grace. It's not timid, tentative faith, it's confident access to God through Christ.
- **Our boasting in our hope:** This is joyful pride, utter confidence in what we hope for. It's hope we're proud of, hope we boast about.
 - There were some who were thinking of turning back to the shadow to the thing that was only pointing to Christ, turning back to the very things that pointed to the finished work of Christ.
 - Christ is the only sure foundation, our only anchor, if you turn away from Christ what are you left with?
 - This is a vibrant, living relationship. It's confident. It's assured. It's filled with hope. The kind of hope that shapes how you live, how you speak, how you face the future.

- These warnings are real, but they are filled with hope, because the author wants us to understand that outside of Christ there is no hope.
- If they turn away from Christ there is no hope, there is no confidence, there are no promises of God, because all of those things are only found in Christ.

Hebrews 3:7-11

"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, "They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways." As I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest."'"

The Authority of the Warning (v. 7a)

"as the Holy Spirit says."

- Notice how the author introduces this passage: "as the Holy Spirit says."
- Not "as the Holy Spirit said" but "says"—present tense. This isn't just ancient history; the Spirit is speaking to us right now, today, through this text.
- The author is quoting Psalm 95:7-11, written by David hundreds of years after the wilderness generation died. Yet David warns his own generation about hardening their hearts "as in the rebellion." And now the author of Hebrews, writing perhaps a thousand years after the original rebellion, says the Holy Spirit says—present tense—this same warning to his generation.
- The warning is perpetually relevant. Every generation needs to hear it. Every believer needs to heed it. The danger of hardening is constant.

The Choice - Today (v. 7b)

"Today, if you hear His voice"

- That word "today" will echo throughout this passage (vv. 7, 13, 15). It's the most urgent word in the text.
- As long as it is "today," there is hope. Even if someone has turned away, as long as they're alive, as long as it's still "today" for them, if they hear the call of God, there is hope.

- But "today" doesn't last forever. There comes a point when "today" becomes "too late."
- **Story: Guy who waited until his death bed to turn to Jesus.**

The Command: Do Not Harden (v. 8a)

"do not harden your hearts"

- The word "harden" (σκληρύνω, sklērynō) means to make hard, to make stubborn, to make callous. It's a deliberate action—not passive drift, but active resistance.
 - Think of how a callus forms on your hands. When you repeatedly do hard physical labor, your skin responds by becoming thick and insensitive. You can't feel as much. That protective layer is useful for work, but it means you've lost sensitivity.
- **Spiritual hardening works the same way:**
 - It starts with small choices to resist God's voice
 - Each time you say "no" to His prompting, your heart becomes less sensitive
 - What once bothered your conscience stops bothering you
 - What once seemed unthinkable becomes normal
 - The voice of the Spirit becomes harder to hear

The Historical Example: The Rebellion (vv. 8b-9)

"as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test"

- The author references the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea, recorded in Numbers 13-14. This is one of the darkest moments in Israel's history.
- The context of the rebellion: Israel had come out of Egypt with mighty signs and wonders. They had seen:
 - The ten plagues that brought Egypt to its knees
 - The parting of the Red Sea
 - The pillar of cloud by day and fire by night
 - Manna from heaven every morning
 - Water from the rock
 - God's presence at Mount Sinai
- But when they reached the edge of the Promised Land and the spies reported giants and fortified cities, the people refused to enter.

Numbers 14:2-3

"And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?'"

- Notice what they said: "God brought us out here to kill us." After everything—after the deliverance, the provision, the presence—they accused God of malicious intent.
- They weren't lacking evidence. They had daily evidence:
- The problem wasn't lack of evidence. The problem was in their hearts.

The Diagnosis: Hardened Hearts (v. 10)

"Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.'"

- This gets to the heart of the problem: They saw God's works but never knew God's ways. This is at the crux of the author's argument.
 - You can witness God's power without trusting God's character
 - You can be physically present for miracles and still have a hard heart
 - You can be part of God's covenant community and still be relationally distant from God
 - You can go through all the right religious motions without actually trusting God
- Knowledge of God's works is not the same as trusting God's ways
 - You can know about God without knowing God.

The Result: Exclusion from Rest (v. 11)

"As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

- Again, the author is quoting a Psalm of David to point to something beyond just the rest that came from entering the Promised Land. Here he is pointing to a greater rest—the ultimate rest that remains for the people of God. The physical rest in the Promised Land was just a shadow of the true rest to come.

- The logic here is that if David, hundreds of years after Israel entered the promised land, could still say "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts," then there must be another rest still to come.
- The warning is this: Don't miss the greater rest the way your fathers missed the lesser rest. Don't let unbelief keep you from entering what God has promised.

The Application: Take Care (vv. 12-15)

Now the author moves from Scripture quotation to direct application:

Hebrews 3:12-15

"Take care, brothers and sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'"

The Warning (v. 12)

"Take care, brothers and sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God"

- These are people the author considers part of the family. These are people who, at least with their actions, have confessed Christ. These are people in the church, in relationship with God's people.
- We can debate, as we have for hundreds of years in the history of the church, about if they are true believers or false believers who are just among the church.
- Does it really matter? The only place that salvation is found is in Christ and we enter this relationship through faith. There is only one thing that separates us from Christ, that is unbelief. Eternal life is found in Christ and in Christ alone, salvation is found in no other name.
- **And it is this "fall away" in unbelief, what we would call apostasy.** Complete departure. Total abandonment. The word means to withdraw, to defect, to revolt.
- The danger at hand is complete rejection of Christ. Those who were looking at going back to the Old Covenant, to works of the Law, looking for salvation in something other than the finished work of Christ.

- These weren't people who were struggling with nuisance sin, or struggling in their sanctification journey to put off the flesh, or felt guilty because they didn't pray enough.
- He is warning those who had come to a place of not believing the promises of God, not trusting in the finished work of Christ, and were in danger of rejecting the only one who can bring true eternal rest.

The Defense: Daily Exhortation (v. 13)

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

This verse gives us our primary defense against hardening.

- **"exhort one another"** The word means "encourage" and "comfort," not just "rebuke." When someone is being "straightened by affliction," we don't just rebuke them—we encourage them, support them, help carry their burden.
- This is the responsibility of every believer. We are our brother's keeper. We are our sister's keeper.
- **"every day"** - Not just on Sunday. Not just at small group. Every single day we need each other. Daily interaction, daily encouragement, daily accountability.
- **"as long as it is called 'today'"** - There's that urgent word again. While there's still time. While hearts can still be softened. While the door is still open.
- **"that none of you may be hardened"** - The goal is prevention. This is where the pastoral heart comes through. We watch out for each other before the hardening sets in. We speak up when we see someone drifting. We intervene before the callus forms.
- **"by the deceitfulness of sin"**
 - sin deceives. It lies. It promises what it cannot deliver. It slowly hardens our hearts without us realizing it.
 - This is why we need community. Because sin is deceitful, we cannot trust our own assessment alone. We need brothers and sisters who love us enough to:
 - Ask hard questions
 - Speak truth in love
 - Call us back when we're wandering

- Encourage us to stay close to Christ
 - Pray for us and with us
- **The Christian life was never meant to be lived in isolation.**

The Condition Restated (v. 14)

"For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end."

- The word "share" (metochoi) means partners, participants, those who have a share in something.
 - We're not just connected to Christ—we partake of Him. We share His life. We're united to Him. This is profound relational language.
 - **This is true "if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end"**
 - "if indeed" (eanper) - a strong conditional speech act emphasizing the reality and importance of the condition.
 - This is real, settled, confident trust in Christ. Not fleeting emotion. Not tentative maybe-faith. It's a confident assurance that says, "I know whom I have believed, and I trust Him completely."
 - Firm means secure, reliable, steadfast.
 - To the end means throughout life, until the finish.
 - Not just for a season. Not just when it's convenient. But persevering trust throughout life.
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- If Christ is our anchor, because He is the one who has suffered in our place, where else are we going to find security—it is only found in Christ.
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- **Think about marriage:** My security in my marriage comes from being in the relationship. I don't wonder "Was my wedding real enough?" I know I'm married because I'm in an active, living relationship with my wife right now.
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- My confidence is present-tense, not just past-tense. But that confidence requires faithfulness—not perfection (we both fail regularly), but fundamental faithfulness: continuing to live in the relationship, maintaining the commitment, keeping the covenant.
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- **Our security in Christ works the same way.** We can have confidence today because we're trusting Him today. We're holding fast to Him today. We're in the relationship today.

The Warning Repeated (v. 15)

"As it is said, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'"

- The author quotes Psalm 95 again. Why the repetition?
- Because we're prone to forget. We're prone to think "this doesn't apply to me." We're prone to assume we're fine.
 - But the author won't let us off the hook. He keeps saying: Today. Right now. Don't harden your heart. Maintain the relationship.

The Sobering Questions (vv. 16-19)

Now the author asks a series of rhetorical questions to drive the point home:

Hebrews 3:16-19

"For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief."

- Persistent disobedience reveals practical unbelief.

The Final Verdict (v. 19)

"So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief."

- "So we see" - This is the conclusion. It's clear. It's evident. There's no mystery here.
- "they were unable to enter"
 - Not because God arbitrarily excluded them. But because their unbelief.
- Here's the final diagnosis. The root cause. The fundamental problem.
 - Not because: The giants were too big, The obstacles were too great, The journey was too hard, God failed to provide
 - **Because of unbelief.**
 - They didn't trust God's character. They didn't believe His promises. They didn't have confidence that He could do what He said. They abandoned the relationship.
- And that unbelief—that abandonment of covenant relationship with the living God—kept them from entering rest.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Examine Your Relationship

2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”

- The only assurance we can have in our walk is to know that we are honestly seeking Christ. He is our only firm foundation, our anchor, our faithful big brother, the Son of our house, our faithful and good high priest.
- The wilderness generation teaches us: It's possible to be among God's people, to go through the motions, to participate in worship...and yet have a heart that's hardening toward God.

2. Understand the Difference Between Struggling with Sin and Apostasy

- If you're struggling with sin, keep running TO Christ.
- Your sins don't break the relationship any more than arguments or failures break a healthy marriage. The relationship is built on Christ's faithfulness, so we keep turning to him, and when we do he is faithful to us.
- I don't get concerned when someone comes to me struggling with persistent sin, I get concerned when they stop caring, or start making excuses for their sin, this is the warning our text is addressing. When that Satanic lie begins to take root, “maybe Jesus isn't big enough”, maybe he won't forgive me, maybe I should just give up.

3. Respond Today

- That word "today" appears five times in this passage (vv. 7, 13, 15 twice). It's the most urgent word in the text.
- If the Holy Spirit is speaking to you—if there's conviction, if there's awareness of hardness, if there's recognition of drift—respond today.
- Not tomorrow. Not next week. Not "when I feel more ready." Today.
- Maybe:
 - You've been ignoring God's voice in a specific area
 - You've been drifting from daily time with Him
 - You've been compromising in small ways that are forming a callus
 - You're here this morning but your heart has been growing hard toward God
- The call is: **"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."**

- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften your heart. Confess your drift. Return to the living God. Renew your relationship with Christ.
- While it's still "today." While you can still hear His voice. While there's still time.

4. Get Connected to Community

Hebrews 3:13

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

- The Christian life cannot be lived alone. We need daily exhortation from one another.

Conclusion: Will You Enter His Rest?

[COMMUNION]

- The wilderness generation saw God's mighty works for forty years. They experienced His provision daily. But they did not enter His rest.
- Why? Not because God was unfaithful. Not because the promise wasn't real. Not because they lacked evidence.
 - Because of unbelief. Because they didn't believe that God could do it.
- The question for us is simple and urgent: For those who are outside of Christ, will you enter His rest through faith?
 - This is not a relationship based on our perfection—it's a relationship based on His faithfulness. But it is a real relationship that requires real faithfulness on our part.
 - **"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'"**
 - Today. Not tomorrow. Not someday. Today.
 - If you hear His voice—and the Spirit is speaking through this text right now—do not harden your heart.
- Respond. Return. Hold fast. Enter the rest that remains for the people of God.

Benediction Prayer:

Father, Your Word cuts deep today. We confess that our hearts are prone to wander, prone to harden, prone to drift from You. We see ourselves in the wilderness generation. We've experienced Your works but haven't always known Your ways. We've seen Your power but haven't always trusted Your heart.

Thank You that You don't leave us in our drift but call us back with warnings and with grace. Thank You for the Holy Spirit who speaks to us today, in this moment, through Your living Word.

We acknowledge that outside of relationship with Christ, there is no rest, no peace, no life at all. We choose today to hold fast to our confidence in Him. We choose today to remain in the relationship. We choose today to trust Your heart even when we can't trace Your hand.

Keep us from hardening. Keep us from drifting. Keep us holding fast to Christ, who is both our rest and the pioneer of our faith.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, the faithful Son over God's house, the one through whom we enter Your rest.
Amen.