

SERMON GUIDE

Hebrews: The Sin of Unbelief

Hebrews 3:14-19



SERMON NOTES

VS 14 – *For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

We have a share in Christ. We are partakers. The picture here is of recipients of all the spiritual blessings in Christ. But again we see the conditional language: if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Some examples for us to think through in Scripture:

- **John 15** -- Jesus tells us to abide in Him. He is the vine, we are the branches. If we abide in Him, remain in Him, we will bear much fruit. If anyone does not abide, he is a thrown away branch, tossed into the fire. The emphasis of Jesus is that true branches abide and remain in Him. But those that don't are thrown away.
- **Revelation 2** -- Jesus speaks to the 7 churches. Over and over again He commends them for particular things they are doing well. But He also mentions the things He has against them. They are told to repent lest their lampstand be removed or He will war against them.

He speaks to the gathered believers, those who profess Christ, and tells them they are partakers of Christ, if indeed they hold fast to their original confidence (faith) in Him.

What then would be the conclusion if we do not hold fast to our assurance? The answer is not that you stop being a partaker of Christ, but that you had never become a partaker of Christ. Read it carefully: "We have become partakers of Christ if we hold fast to our assurance." And so, "If we do not hold fast to our confession, then we have not become partakers of Christ."

We are not to treat salvation like a vaccination we got years ago. "Yeah, I got my polio shot when I was 2." Faith is ongoing. We didn't trust Christ when we were 10. We're trusting Him daily. We continue.

VS 15 – *As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

He then returns to the quote of Psalm 95. It is a call to repentance and eager responsiveness to God.

The quote from Psalm 95 is one of warning not to fall away like their fathers in the wilderness. The Hebrew writer is quoting it for the believers to heed the same call. The call to ongoing repentance as we hear God's voice through His Word is the life of a Christian. It is not one-time faith and repentance, but ongoing faith and repentance.

We keep believing. We keep turning from sin. Repentance is a word used mostly in church (if used there at all) and not in our culture. So we need to define it and understand it. Repentance isn't feeling bad for sin (that's contrition) and it isn't acknowledging sin (that's confession). It is turning away from our sin and towards obedience to God.

Ways we often avoid repentance by:

- **Blame shifting.** Blaming others, circumstances, and God for causing our actions.
- **Rationalization.** Explaining our actions away.
- **Cynicism.** Tear others down in an attempt to make ourselves feel better about ourself and our actions.
- **Self-Atonement.** Attempting to atone for our actions by self-harm or feeling really, really bad and counting ourselves worthless.

True repentance owns our sin and turns back to God in obedience, knowing we have forgiveness and grace in Christ.

VS 16-18 – 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?

Who experienced punishment and rejection from God? Those who rebelled. They provoked God. They sinned. The disobedient. This is why the Hebrew writer has exhorted continuation in the faith over and over. The Israelites that fell in the wilderness were those that sinned, rebelled, and provoked God. So don't do that.

God's judgment fell on those who walked in sin and rebellion and failed to repent.

VS 19 – So we see that we were unable to enter because of unbelief.

And what was underneath this all? Unbelief. The sin of unbelief. This is massively important for us to talk about. Unbelief exists in the person who says, "I don't believe in God. I'm not a Christian. I deny Jesus is Lord." That is one kind of unbelief. But there is another kind of unbelief, one that most of us need to be more on guard for. It is the kind that lies underneath every sin we commit.

Illustration: Adam and Eve in the Garden. The sin of disobeying and eating the fruit is a symptom of a deeper sin: unbelief. She didn't ultimately believe that God knew best. That God had her best in mind. That God's ways were greater. That would God allowed her to have and forbid her to have were for her good, and better than having access to everything. Unbelief.

Unbelief is at the root of every sin we commit. If we truly believed God, all the time, would we ever sin? No. Even our desires that lead us to sin are desires that are unbelief. If we believed we'd be more happy obeying God than obeying our desires, we wouldn't sin. Be we struggle with unbelief. So, when I think that sin will make me happy, at that point, I simply don't believe what God says about it. Disobedience is the fruit of unbelief, just like obedience is the fruit of faith.

In Mark 9, Jesus interacts with a father whose child has violent seizures and convulsions. Jesus says that to the one who believes, all things are possible. The father, with honesty, says to Jesus, "I believe, help my unbelief."

This sort of posture before God is so insightful for us to see. As Christians, we believe. But we need help for that lingering unbelief that can often lurk in our hearts. This father didn't pretend it wasn't there. He acknowledged it and asked the Lord to help him through it.

We should do the same. We must acknowledge that unbelief lurks in our hearts. It can (and does) lead us to sin, doubt God's promises, distrust God's character, and many other things. We should loathe it. Let's confess it. Let's give it to Christ and ask for His help in overcoming it. Let's rely on the Holy Spirit to empower us in the faith.

Fill your mind with truth. Rehearse the truth to your heart. Act on faith and strengthen that spiritual muscle.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?



- **REVIEW:**
 - Read **Hebrews 3:14-19** and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
 - Additional Scripture:
 - 1 Corinthians 15:2
 - Numbers 14:2
 - Deuteronomy 1:34-35
 - Psalm 78:22
- **REFLECT:**
 - What does it mean to hold our original confidence?
 - What does it mean to harden your heart? What are some tangible ways that we do this?
 - Why is unbelief a sin?
- **RESPOND:**
 - What are ways you can hold fast to your original confidence?
 - How does this understanding of unbelief change your view of sin?
- **MEDITATE:**
 - Hebrews 3:15 -- As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."
- **MEMORIZE:**
 - Colossians 1:16 – For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him.



- **FOLLOW:** How will you follow Jesus this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **FISH:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - Shepherding Elder - **Shawn Casto**
 - Ministry - **Mobilization Pastor**
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
 - Kaesi
 - Ethan & Dustin (May 16 - June 30)
 - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on June 15
 - London Team departing June 30
 - Asian Pacific Rim Team #2 departing August 16
 - Central Asia Team #2 departing on September 27
 - **Pray for the lost.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>