

# SERMON GUIDE

Hebrews: Take Care

Hebrews 3:7-13



6.9.2024

## SERMON NOTES:

### Scripture Exegesis: Hebrews 3:7-13

The Hebrew writer just finished telling the Christians that they are the house of God (the people of God) if indeed they hold fast to their confidence and hope. Hold fast to their confession and faith in Christ.

**VS 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 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 Hebrew writer then tells the Christians to heed the words of the Holy Spirit, in the writing of Psalm 95. By the way, Psalm 95 is written by David (Hebrew writer tells us this in Hebrews 4:7). But the Hebrew writer here says the Holy Spirit says. Is he confused? No. This is evidence super early in the first century of Christian understanding of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The Bible is written by men as they are carried by the Holy Spirit.

**2 Peter 1:21 -- For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

He then quotes Psalm 95:7-11, which recounts the children of Israel coming out of Egypt during the Exodus. There in the wilderness many of them hardened their hearts against God. You can read about in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20, but they quarreled and tested God due to their lack of water. In Massah, they complained against Moses and asked among themselves, "Is the LORD not among us?" They hardened their hearts in unbelief.

That is the issue: the sin of unbelief. The result in the wilderness is the LORD did not let that generation enter into the Promised Land. God promises them in Number 14 that they couldn't enter.

Okay, so why is he referencing Psalm 95 and the rebellion of the Israelites in the wilderness? Because he just told them they are God's house if they hold fast to the faith. Now he's showing them what that requires.

**VS 12-13 -- *Take care, brothers, 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.***

His exhortation to them in light of what happened in the wilderness is to warn them to "take care, lest there be in any of them an evil, unbelieving heart, leading them to fall away from the living God.

The unbelieving heart was a heart like their fathers which kept them from entering God's rest. That evil unbelieving heart can lead you to fall away from the living God. Notice here that he says "fall away from the living God" or "depart from the living God." You cannot depart from a place where you aren't. Those who fell in the wilderness were those who had been led out of Egypt. The warnings of Hebrews are to those who had confessed faith in Christ and were a part of the visible church.

The Hebrew writer tells them how to avoid falling away: exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today. This is why Christianity community is so important. We need people who can exhort us, teach us, correct us, and help us. We need the body of Christ to hold our hand in times of need and slap our hand in times of rebellion. As long as it can be called "today" we have a moral duty not to harden our hearts.

The goal and desired outcome is that none of us (professing believers) may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and fall away from the living God.

### **Theological highlights**

**i. Warning against apostasy** -- We see here a warning against apostasy. Apostasy is the abandonment or renunciation of the faith. Apostasy is a real sin, committed by real people. This is something Arminians (non-Calvinists) get that most Calvinists don't. To be crystal clear, not one of God's elect can ever be taken out of God's electing and sovereign decree. This is something Calvinists get right that Arminians don't. Non-Calvinists can read Romans 8-11 and not see the absolute sovereignty of God. But non-Calvinists can read through Hebrews and see real apostasy there and Calvinists often talk about the warnings against apostasy as hypothetical. That's like having "keep off the grass" signs in the middle of the desert (unnecessary because there isn't any).

These warnings in Hebrews are not hypothetical because the warnings themselves don't tell us they are hypothetical. The rebellion in Egypt being referred to wasn't hypothetical and neither is the warning for us not to do it again.

So how do apostates arrive in that condition? He tells us.

**ii. Deceitfulness of sin** -- Sin is our enemy. Sin is often personified in the Scriptures as an active aggressor against us, not simply the term for something we shouldn't have done. Sin is described as an active enemy.

**Genesis 4:7 -- If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."**

God says to Cain that sin is crouching at the door, like a predator, ready to pounce. Indwelling sin is the seed of rebellion and flesh that still resides within our hearts as believers. We are not exempt from this struggle.

Spurgeon said, "Alas! We are sadly prone to sin, and evil has great influence over us. When I say this, I refer not only to those who are "dead in trespasses and sins," in whom sin is the great reigning power,

for they are the servants of sin; but I refer also to the people of God. Even we that have been born again, and are, in a measure, sanctified by the Spirit of God; even we, I say, have a fleshly nature, whose tendencies are evil, whose desires draw towards sin. How soon we slip! How much we need to be held up! How ought we daily to cry for grace, lest we also should be “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”!

**Jeremiah 17:9 -- The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?**

So when you consider that indwelling sin resides in the hearts of men, that's why you understand that our hearts are deceitful, sick. We cannot let our hearts go unchecked. This is why the Hebrew writer tells us to "take care." Sin is deceitful because it comes at us in disguises and subtleties. It woos us. It adapts itself to our circumstances. It gets us to question things like "Is this really wrong?" Sin flatters people to think they can go a certain distance with it and turn away when they need to without harm and with ease. Sin supplies us with endless excuses to protect our consciences from being convicted (like reminding us that we're not as bad as others we know). Perhaps the greatest deceitfulness of sin is that it offers promises and reward that it can never fulfill.

**Illustration:** Story of Jonah, bought the ticket to Tarshish but never arrived there. That's how the deceitfulness of sin works. We buy the ticket and pay the price, but never get where sin promised to take us.

And here's the point...our hearts of sin can deceive us in all sorts of creative ways. If we don't fight against it, it leads to a hardening of the heart.

**iii. Hardened hearts** -- Unbelieving hearts, or hardened hearts, are something we must "take care" to avoid. We have an active role in playing to keep our hearts from being hardened. We have to lead our hearts, not simply let them drift.

What are some characteristics of a hardened heart?

- doesn't obey God (and doesn't desire to)
- has grown comfortable with their sin
- doesn't recognize God's hand in things
- isolation from God and others
- unwilling to forgive others
- you just stop caring
- no desire for spiritual growth
- no concern for those who don't know Christ
- no desire to worship
- you're always critical
- start to question God's Word (this is so common in those looking for justification for sin)
- you've surrounded yourself with companions in sin

How do we fight the deceitfulness of sin and a hardened heart so that we don't become apostates?

**iv. Exhorting one another** -- He gives us a remedy in the text for how to take care. We are told to exhort one another. This means that we are in community with other believers. We surround ourselves with people that can help us in our faith.

- family/children
- worship gatherings
- community
- friend groups

Practically speaking, it looks like speaking truth to each other. It looks like having compassion for and serving one another. It looks like encouraging one another in our faith. It looks like confessing our sins to God, reading the Scriptures and asking the Lord to renew our minds.

Exhorting one another is the act of speaking truth to one another and building one another up in the truth. Sometimes that truth will strengthen us in our affirmation of it. Other times that truth will weaken sin's grip on us if we're struggling in an area. As believers, it is so important that we have this because the sin of apostasy is real. Hardened hearts are real. The deceitfulness of sin is real. So we need to interact and encounter truth daily (as long as it's called today).

**Remember two really important things:**

1. In Christ, there is no condemnation. Your sins are forgiven and the blood of Christ covers you. So recognize your sin and turn from it.
2. You are more sinful than you even recognize and there will always be a need for repentance. Nobody can say anything about you in which you couldn't (if you were honest) fire back with even more. Satan the accuser has plenty of ammunition to bring against you. But remind him of the truth.

***Martin Luther -- "So when the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, tell him this: "I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!"***



- 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?



## LOOK UP

- **REVIEW:**

- Read **Hebrews 3:7-13** 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:
  - Hebrews 3:7-13
  - 1 John 2:19
  - 2 Peter 1:21
  - Genesis 4:7
  - Jeremiah 17:9

- **REFLECT:**

- In what way is the Bible inspired?
- What is apostasy? How do you hold that in contention with eternal security?
- If Christians have been given a new heart in Christ, why do we still sin?
- What does it mean to harden your heart? How can you avoid it?

- **RESPOND:**

- What does it mean that there is no condemnation in Christ?
- Do you wonder whether or not you are a Christian?
- How should you respond to temptation?

- **MEDITATE:**

- Hebrews 3:12 -- Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

- **MEMORIZE:**

- Titus 3:4-5 -- But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit



## LOOK AHEAD

- **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 - **Brett Perkins**
  - Ministry - **Worship 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>