

Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13

Day 1

Hardened Hearts. Read Hebrews 3:7-11

1. What is the second warning given in this letter? 3:7,8a (Repeated in 3:15,4:7) How does that compare to the first warning in 2:1?

- How do we harden our hearts? What does the word “Today” add to this command?

2. What event in Israel’s past did the writer use to illustrate hardened hearts? 3:8b,9 (See Psalms 106:24,25)

- *Hebrews 3:7,8 is quoted from Psalm 95:7,8..The original Hebrews words for “rebellion” and “testing” read “Meribah” and “Massah” in Psalm 95. Why was this place given those names? Exodus 17:1-7 How had they tested the Lord? 17:7b*

Digging Deeper
What else was named Meribah?
Numbers 20 (See especially vs. 13)

3. To what behaviors had their hardened hearts led? 3:9a

- What had the people seen and for how long? 3:9b *What amazing works can you think of that the nation of Israel had seen during their exodus and journey through the desert?*

4. List the phrases in 3:8-10 that describe the condition of the people’s hearts and minds, or their attitude toward God

Hardened hearts; rebellion/provoked me;

- Although the nation of Israel had seen the tremendous “ways” that God had worked on their behalf, in what sense do you think hadn’t “known” God’s ways?

FYI: “They refused to trust God for the great things He promised, and they were unwilling to continue in trust. Therefore they could not **enter** the **rest** God had appointed for them, the Land of Canaan.” - David Guzik

5. *Numbers 13-14 give the account of the spies going into the promised land and their report. In spite of Caleb’s encouragement (Numbers 13:40), how did the people react? Numbers 13:20 – 14:4 What did they imagine about the Lord’s plans for them? 14:3*

6. What plea did Moses and Aaron make to the people? Numbers 14:8-9, 19

- How did the people respond? Numbers 14:10
- What was the Lord’s description of their behavior? Numbers 14:11,22b,23b
- How was Caleb different? Numbers 14:24

7. What judgment was made against “that generation”? Hebrews 3:11 (See Numbers 14:20-23; 29)

- Who were the exceptions? Numbers 14:30,31

FYI: “It all began so well - but ended so poorly. Of the 600,000 men (the million-plus Israelites who began so well), only two over the age of twenty ever got to the Promised Land – and that was forty years later... It is this concern that haunts the writer of the book of Hebrews...His fear is that the doleful fate of the generation of the Exodus will be repeated in the experience of the Jewish Christians in their storm-tossed little church. He undoubtedly personally knew this little flock. Many of their spiritual exoduses had been beautiful, even dramatic. But now that they were undergoing hardship, would they finish well? Not if they made the same errors as the Israelites did when troubles came... We are not left in the dark regarding the hard-heartedness that the Psalmist warns about...Hardness of heart originates in *unbelief*, which produces *contempt* for God, which in turn shows itself in distinct behavioral patterns – namely, *negativism, grumbling, quarreling and disobedience.*”
- R. Kent Hughes (98,101)

Applying the Word: *When are you hesitant to trust in God’s goodness toward you? How are you “going astray” in your heart? What are you failing to believe about His love and grace? Is there something causing you to grumble or disobey?*

Day 2

Encouragement and Perseverance. Read Hebrews 3:12-19

8. What other adjectives are given to a “hard heart”? 3:12

- What behavior follows? 3:12b

Digging Deeper

To what do people turn when they fall away from the “living God”?
Galatians 4:8-10; Romans 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 10:5

Contrast 1 Thess. 1:9b

FYI: “**Lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief:** This is strong language, but we often underestimate the terrible nature of our **unbelief**... Refusing to believe God is a serious sin because it shows... a **departing from the living God.** ‘Unbelief is not inability to understand, but *unwillingness to trust*... it is the will, not the intelligence, that is involved.’ (Newell)” - David Guzik

9. What is important in helping us to be strong in our faith? 3:13a (Crossref. 10:24,25)

- See Paul's testimony of the comfort he gave others. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

10. What can cause a heart to harden? 3:13b (See Ephesians 4:22)

- In what ways do you think sin is "deceitful"?

FYI: "When we don't believe God, we don't stop believing – we simply start believing in a lie...One great danger of sin is its **deceitfulness**. If it came with full revelation, full exposure of all its consequences, it would be unattractive – but the nature of sin is **deceitfulness**..."

- Sin is deceitful in the way that it comes to us.
- Sin is deceitful in what it promises us.
- Sin is deceitful in what it calls itself.
- Sin is deceitful in the excuses it makes, both before and after the sin."

- David Guzik

11. How do we become "*partakers of Christ*"? 3:14 (Compare 3:6b)

- How do these compare to John 15:4,9,10?

FYI: (3:1,14) **Partakers** Strong's NT:3353; a sharer; by implication an associate:

" 'The confidence we had at first...' 'the beginning of our confidence' (KJV), 'our original confidence' (NEB), 'the trust with which we began' (Phillips). The Israelites had no lack of confidence just after the Exodus, but it faded quickly a few days into the wilderness...Even a slight lessening of confidence is a warning. We must 'hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.' Perseverance is not a forgone conclusion. So the author of Hebrews next warns us, again repeating the words of Psalm 95:7,8...Brothers and sisters, if we hear His voice, we must do something now!"

- R. Kent Hughes (103,104)

12. Why do you think the writer repeats the warning from 3:7,8 in 3:15?

13. What had the people who had come out of Egypt "heard" (3:16) and experienced from God?

14. What words describe their response to God in:

- 3:16 *provoked/rebelled*
- 3:17
- 3:18
- 3:19

15. *The people who rebelled had seen God's amazing miracles in the Exodus. They had been recipients of God's loving, continuous care and protection. (See Deuteronomy 1:30-33) Was there any basis for their disbelief in God's promises? What reasons would you give for their rebellion? How does this compare to Adam and Eve?*

16. What conclusion did the writer make? 3:19

- What should we learn from their example? 1 Corinthians 10:1-6

FYI: "The important truths are that the people who failed to enter Canaan were the ones who had heard God's promise concerning the land and that they refused to believe what God had promised...First-century readers of Hebrews faced a similar danger spiritually."
- The NIV Study Bible

Applying the Word: *Do you see any areas of your life where your heart is hardened to God? Why? Where are you being self-reliant and not trusting in Him? What are you not trusting in: His love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, goodness, kindness, patience, etc. (i.e. His "ways" - 3:10)?*

Day 3

Entering God's Rest. Read Hebrews 4:1-7

17. What warning about entering God's rest is given in 4:1? (Cf. 2:1) *What does the "therefore" relate back to?*

- What concern did Paul have? 1 Corinthians 9:26,27

FYI: Rest "The Greek term is a compound word composed of *kata* plus *pausis*. It means 'to cease, to stop something'...In Hebrew, it refers to something that can be entered, like a room or a space. We might call it God's specially provided resting space."
- Charles Swindoll (65)

Fall short Strong's NT:5302 *hustereo*; to be later, i.e. (by implication) to be inferior; generally, to fall short (be deficient)

18. Why were the Hebrews just as responsible as the generation that came out of Egypt with Moses? 4:2a

- Why did the people in Moses' day fall short of entering His rest? 4:2b

19. From Numbers 14:27,35, what phrases describe how the Israelites had corporately responded to the Lord and His promises? What does this say about the importance of each generation's belief in God? *How critical was this early Christian generation's belief?*

FYI: "Many, perhaps thousands, were believers, (they believed in God), but only two really trusted God and found rest... Leon Morris says that faith here in Hebrews 4:2 is 'the attitude of trusting God wholeheartedly.'...Faith that pleases God is belief plus trust....Acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of the world will not give us rest. Trust in Him is what gives rest to our souls...First, trust in Christ's sacrificial death begins our rest by giving us rest from the burden of guilt for our sins and a gnawing conscience. Second, trust in His character as an almighty God and a loving Savior gives us rest as we place our burdens on him. Just as a child sleeps so well in His parents' arms, so we rest in God. The principle is so simple: the more trust, the more rest." - R. Kent Hughes

20. Who enters God's rest? 4:3a

- What did the writer connect with this? 4:3b,4

21. What does "*My rest*" and "*His works*" say about the nature of this rest?

FYI: "What believers can now enter is none other than the same kind of rest which the Creator enjoyed when He had completed His works, which means that the rest idea is of completion and not of inactivity." - Donald Guthrie (113)

"God calls the rest being offered '*My rest*' because it is the rest He himself enjoys. This in itself is a stupendous revelation. It means that when we are given rest by Him, it is not simply a relaxation of tensions, but a rest that is qualitatively the same rest God enjoys – His personal rest that He shares with us!...God finished His great work and rested, but it was not a cessation from work, but rather the proper repose that comes from completing a great work. Jesus referred to His Father's ongoing works (John 5:17)...His rest is a joyous, satisfying, and working rest."
- R. Kent Hughes

22. Where is our rest found? Matthew 11:28-30

23. What reason is given for the peoples' failure to enter into rest? 4:6 Cf. 3:18

24. When was the warning "*do not harden your hearts*" repeated? 4:7

- What does that indicate about the achievement of this rest? 4:8
- Hebrews 4:7 is taken from Psalm 95. What words precede this appeal and what perspective does that give? Ps. 95:1-7

Digging Deeper
In the supplemental pages, at the back of homework, do key word markings for Hebrews 3:7-4:7.

Applying the Word: We “sin” when we go our own way because we desire something that seems more enjoyable or easier or beneficial. Actually sin is literally “missing the mark” and not pursuing what is best for us. What do you think makes it so hard to believe at times that what God says is for our best?

Day 4

Resting from our Works. Read Hebrews 4:8-13

25. Since rest was not achieved through Joshua, what conclusion did the writer come to? 4:9

FYI: “The mention of **Joshua** reminds us that the name ‘Jesus’ is the same as ‘**Joshua**.’ The second Joshua will finish what the first Joshua left unfinished. Jesus is greater than both Moses and the first Joshua.” - David Guzik

26. What does entering that rest require on our part? 4:10

- What did Paul say about this in Philippians 3:7-9?

FYI: “Whereas God rested from the work of creation, the believer ceases his efforts to gain salvation by his own works and rests in the finished work of Christ on the cross.” - The NIV Study Bible (1863)

“The Old Testament ‘Jesus’ (Joshua) had led his followers to the land of Canaan. But that was not the real rest but only a type...When we believed, we finished with our works-righteousness and entered God’s rest. Yet we long to serve Christ.” - R. Kent Hughes

27. In what sense do we “*labor/make every effort*” to find “*rest*”? 4:11a

FYI: “The point here is that nothing can prevent the promised rest from taking effect except distrust and disobedience. God’s promised rest stands. Anyone can have it...We must do our utmost to combine the hearing of the good news of the offered rest with genuine faith – that is, belief plus trust.” - R. Kent Hughes (112,113)

“One requirement for gaining that rest for those to whom the epistle was written, was to believe the gospel (4:3), but at the same time they were being urged to ‘make every effort to enter that rest’ (verse 11)...What the Lord wanted from the Israelites was a steady unwavering trust in His ability and willingness to lead them into their rest – the Promised Land – and He also wanted to see the obedience that resulted from such a trust...The Israelites in the wilderness faced the temptation not to go forward but to return to Egypt, while the readers of Hebrews faced a similar temptation to revert to Judaism, as the persecution of believers and the rigors of authentic Christian living began to bite...Although Christians are saved by their faith in the completed work of Christ and there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, we all will have to give an account of ourselves, our lives and our service before Him.” - W M Henry (43,44)

28. How is this resting and working combination described in the following?

- Ephesians 2:8-10
- Philippians 2:12,13

29. What example did the writer give about disobedience? 4:11b (See also 4:6b)

- What do you think he meant by *falling*? Compare Hebrews 3:12

FYI: "If we consider the Israelites who died in the wilderness without entering the Promised Land, it seems unreasonable to suggest that they were all 'lost' as we would understand the term. If so, it would include Moses and Aaron, who were among that group who did not enter the land. This would appear to be extremely unlikely, to say the least, particularly since Moses appeared on the mountain of transfiguration with the Lord (Luke 9:28-36) and is numbered among the giants of faith, who are discussed in Hebrews 11." - W M Henry (42)

30. How do you think the statement in 4:11 is connected to the idea of God's word in 4:12,13?

31. What attributes are given of the Word of God? 4:12

- *Living, active,*

32. How deeply does the Word of God penetrate/pierce our hearts and minds? 4:12b (2 Corinthians 10:4,5)

FYI: *dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow* "a poetic statement of the power of God's Word to pierce the human personality to its very depths. God's Word can cut through anything and bring conviction... through all the pretensions and religious facade, leaving us convicted... God's Word – read, meditated upon, and prayerfully applied – will give us brilliant discernment and profound self-knowledge. James indicates that God's Word functions as a mirror revealing who and what we really are (cf. James 1:23,24). This gift of self-knowledge is no small grace because when we grasp something of the serpentine ways of our hearts, we are disposed to cast ourselves even more on God's grace. And that is no small grace! But we will also be judged by God's Word. And herein lies the warning to those who in disobedience are falling away. His judgment will be perfectly discerning." - R. Kent Hughes (121,122)

"Some of us today have a great deal of trouble resting in the Lord. Often we don't even know why. But there is a desire within our souls that says, 'I want that rest. I need it. I must find relief to this churning and stress. But I just can't seem to enter into it.' One of the reasons we can't experience that rest is that we have a tendency to hide from the truth. That's where the Word of God comes into the picture - to open our hearts to the truth by its piercing revelations." - Charles Swindoll (74)

33. What is the Word of God called in Ephesians 6:17? *What power does that give it?* See Ephesians 3:16-21

34. Underline what God's word does in our lives.

- 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.
- Colossians 1:4-6 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope reserved for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is bearing fruit and increasing, even as *it has been doing* in you also since the day you heard *it* and understood the grace of God in truth; NAS
- John 17:27 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.
- John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
- Psalm 19:7 "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." .

35. How perfectly does God understand us? 4:13 (See 1 Corinthians 4:5)

- What personal accountability does this bring? What assurance does it give about the accountability of others?

36. Which of the warnings and encouragement in 3:7-4:13, given to the Hebrew Christians in their struggles, impacts you the most?

Applying the Word: *In what area, have you or someone you know been tempted to believe in man's word over God's word? Why?*

How would you describe the piercing/penetrating effect of the Word of God on your heart personally? Can you think of a meaningful time/event when this happened?

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12