



The Book of Hebrews 3:7-11_Harden Not Your Hearts! Resurrection Sunday, March 31, 2024

Holy Text: Hebrews 3:7-11

- So far in Hebrews, we read and worked through a very intentional apologetic (defense) by the author, via the Holy Spirit, to convince and/or encourage primarily Hebrew/Jewish hearers to believe in and hold fast to Christ.
- Why would this be? As William MacDonald said in his excellent commentary:

In a general way, Hebrews deals with the tremendous struggle involved in leaving one religious system for another. There is the violent wrenching of old ties, the stresses and tensions of alienation, and the formidable pressures exerted on the renegade to return.

But in this Epistle the problem was not just a question of leaving an old system for a new one of equal value. Rather it was a matter of leaving Judaism for Christ, and as the writer shows, this involved leaving shadows for the substance, ritual for reality, the prior for the ultimate, the temporary for the permanent—in short, the good for the best.

The problem also involved leaving the popular for the unpopular, the majority for the minority, and the oppressors for the oppressed. And this precipitated many serious problems.¹

- Is this relevant for us today? Yes! Although our pressures and temptation may be a bit different, we nevertheless face them. The course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience (Eph 2:2) is well encapsulated by the prophet Isaiah:

***Isaiah 5:20-21 (KJV)** Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! **21** Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*

- The world is backwards! Take anything holy and right and good (as God defines these things) and you will find vocal and passionate people advocating for the opposite:
 1. Biblical sexuality vs the abomination of the LGBTQ movement
 2. The very design of men and women vs hyper-patriarchy and feminism
 3. Biblical Marriage vs the push to over-throw the godly household
 4. Protecting children vs aborting them
 5. Propriety and shamefacedness vs lasciviousness and haughtiness
- So because the nature of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the constant fight thereof, there is a cost to following Jesus Christ for all who believe. He said as much:

***Luke 9:23-26 (KJV)** And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. **24** For whosoever will save his life*

¹ *Bible Believer's Commentary*, William MacDonald, 1995.

shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. **25** For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? **26** For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

Matthew 10:34-39 (KJV) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. **35** For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. **36** And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. **37** He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. **38** And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. **39** He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

- Beloved, our King is worthy of such sacrifice! He is worthy of such devotion! Why?
Matthew 1:20-21 (KJV) But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. **21** And she shall bring forth a son, **and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.**
- Hallelujah!
1 Timothy 3:16 (KJV) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.
- In our Text today, the author lays out a chilling, and very applicable exhortation (and warning) not only to his immediate hearers, but through them, to us as well...
 1. Listen! Hear!
 2. Listen right now...Today!
 3. Tomorrow is not promised!
 4. Don't have a hard heart!
 5. Don't be wilderness-hearer! Don't grieve the LORD!
 6. Hear His voice! Know His ways...
 7. So you can enter into His rest!

Working through the Passage

Hebrews 3:7 (KJV) *Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,*

- Remember, *wherefore* is *therefore*. These exhortations and warnings are connected to those before them:
 1. In these last days, God has spoken to us by His Son, Jesus Christ, who "being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb 1:1-3)
 2. Christ is greater than the angels! (Heb 1:4-14)
 3. Christ's salvation is great! We should heed His Words and those of His apostles! (Heb 2:1-4)
 4. Although mankind is not worthy, Christ's salvation was provided by His sufferings and death! (Heb 2:5-15)

5. Christ is greater than Abraham! (Heb 2:16)
 6. Christ is our merciful and faithful High Priest who is able to help us when we are tempted! (Heb 2:17-18)
 7. Christ is greater than Moses; He is a Son over His own House! (Heb 3:1-6)
- The lessor gives way to the Greater! The old is superseded by the New! The types and shadows find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ!
 - And the author reminds us that his words aren't those of man, but of God's: "as the Holy Ghost saith..." Given the skepticism and man-centeredness of the day, this IS a needful reminder:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*

2 Peter 1:19-21 (KJV) *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

- Indeed, the author quotes the Psalmist:

Psalms 95:7-11 (KJV) *For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, 8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. 10 Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: 11 Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.*
- The writer implores the hearer to embrace the urgency of "Today." Why?
 1. Because God should be obeyed when He speaks. Who are we to delay our obedience?
 2. Because tomorrow is promised to no man. (Prov 27:1; Jam 4:13-15)
 3. Because to disobey "today" demonstrates a hard-heart and grieves (angers) God!
- And Today, what what is God saying? **What is His primary message?**
 1. God commands men everywhere to repent.

Acts 17:30 (KJV) *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*

Romans 2:4 (KJV) *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

2. Of what? Of sin.

Romans 3:23 (KJV) *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Romans 5:12 (KJV) *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

1 John 3:4 (KJV) Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Romans 6:23 (KJV) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

3. God commands we then turn to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness sin.

Mark 1:15 (KJV) And saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

Acts 2:36-38 (KJV) Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. **37** Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? **38** Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Romans 10:9-11 (KJV) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. **10** For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. **11** For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

- **This same Jesus, who is both LORD and Christ, suffered for our sins and is RISEN from the dead!**

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (KJV) Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; **2** By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. **3** For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; **4** And that he was buried, **and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:**

- This message is urgent and must be embraced “TODAY,” because judgment awaits all men. **2 Corinthians 5:10-11 (KJV)** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. **11** Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

Hebrews 3:8 (KJV) Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: **9 (KJV)** When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

- This next command, “Harden not your hearts,” is important because of mankind’s propensity (including God’s people) to do just that!
- “Propensity” (“tendency, inclination”) might be understating the actual situation. Scripture is FILLED with examples of God’s people refusing to listen to Him!
- The provocation...the day of temptation...points to the consistent unfaithfulness of Israel in the wilderness with Moses. William MacDonald writes:

It was a dreary record of complaint, lust, idolatry, unbelief, and rebellion. At Rephidim, for instance, they complained because of lack of water and doubted God's presence in their midst (Exo 17:1-7). At the wilderness of Paran when the unbelieving spies returned with an evil report of discouragement and doubt (Num 13:25-29), the people decided that they should go back to Egypt, the land of their slavery (Num 14:4).

- And we could go on and on, from the Idolatry at Sinai (Ex 32) to the rebellion of Korah and his company (Num 16). The consequences of such often resulted in severe judgment from God (plague and death).
- God used words concerning them like “stiff-necked,” which is an image for a hard heart.²

Exodus 32:9 (KJV) *And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:*

Deuteronomy 10:12-16 (KJV) *And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, **13** To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? **14** Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth *also*, with all that therein is. **15** Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even you above all people, as it is this day.* **16** Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.*

- The **command** in our Text is “Don’t be this way!” Can you think of a worse condition than having a heart unreceptive to the Words of God?
- First, **what is a heart?**
 1. “A muscle in your chest that pumps blood!” – Voddie Baucham
 2. Often from the Hebrew *lêbâb* in the OT and the Greek *kardia* in the NT. Vines Dictionary says, “The word came to stand to stand for man’s entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements. In other words, the heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life. The Bible describes human depravity as in the “heart” because sin is a principle which has its seat in the center of man’s inward life, and then defiles the whole circuit of his action.”
 3. The Webster 1828 gives a 15-part definition to include “the seat of affections and passions,” “the seat of understanding,” and “the seat of the will.” The heart as used in Scripture points to “the seat of man’s emotions; his feelings and thoughts; his soul.” The heart is the core our being, the inner man.
- **What is a hardened heart?** Our definition: *A hard heart is a heart that will not hear and obey. It is not necessarily a confused heart. It understands, but is more committed to its own will than God’s. In short, it is a person to whom God has spoken and likely has greatly blessed, but who still will not submit to Him.*
- It is a devastatingly sad state given the love and mercy of God. Nehemiah describes such:

² Also called an uncircumcised heart, Acts 5:51-53.

Nehemiah 9:7-17 (KJV) *Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; 8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous: 9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; 10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. 11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. 12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. 13 Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: 14 And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: 15 And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. 16 **But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, 17 And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.***

- **What causes a hardened heart?** A love of sin certainly does, particularly a prideful love for ease and “good times.”

Matthew 13:19-21 (KJV) *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. 20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

- And the more one traffics in sin, the harder one’s heart becomes:

Matthew 24:12 (KJV) *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

Ephesians 4:19 (KJV) *Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

1 Timothy 4:1-2 (KJV) *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

- Dangerously, after prolonged disobedience, God Himself can give one over to hardness:

Romans 1:22-32 (KJV) *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own*

bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient: 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

• **How might one be healed of a hard heart? How will you know?**

1. It requires an act of God: a new heart of flesh rather than stone. (Ezek 11:9)
Ezekiel 36:26-27 (KJV) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.
2. This wonderful transformation happens when one repents and believes in Jesus!
2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
3. You'll know because as you are sanctified (continually purified) by the Holy Spirit, your affections will change and your receptivity to God's Word will increase.
James 1:21-22 (KJV) Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Hebrews 3:10 (KJV) Wherefore I was grieved³ with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

- These are sad Words: God was grieved: *Psalms 78:40 (KJV) How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!*
- He was displeased with them because they provoked Him! God's displeasure and anger may not be easy to think about, nor does it make for popular preaching, but it exists!

Romans 1:18 (KJV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Psalms 7:11 (KJV) God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

Hebrews 3:11 (KJV) So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

³ Thayer Definition:1) to be wroth or displeased with 2) to loathe 3) to spew out 4) to be disgusted with.

- The rest referred to in the quoted Psalm was a physical one: the Promised Land of Canaan. The generation with which God was angry would not enter it because of their hard-heartedness.
- **The antitypical rest however is not just physical; it is spiritual: eternal life in Jesus Christ. It begins at our salvation and will be fully consummated at the Return of Christ. (Heb 4:8-9)**

Exhortation

Beloved, will you enter God's rest? Have you repented and believed in the risen LORD, Jesus Christ? Does your life bear witness?

Flee the hard heart and run to Christ; receive a new heart that loves God and His Word! Do it... TODAY!