

Hebrews

Chapter 3:7-13

⁷ *Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, ⁸ Do not **harden** your hearts as when they **provoked** Me, as on the day of **trial** in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put Me to the **test**, and **saw** My works for forty years.*

Therefore > The previous verse states > ⁶ *but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house— whose house we are, if we hold firmly to our confidence and the boast of our **hope**.*

(Pink) (The author's comments become very important as we discuss later the concept of *rest*.) The "**hope**" mentioned here is that made known by the Gospel (Colossians 1:23), the **hope** which is laid up for God's people in Heaven (Colossians 1:5), the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Christians have been begotten unto a **living hope** (1 Peter 1:3), that "**blessed hope**" (Titus 2:13), namely, the return of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, when He shall come to take us unto Himself, to make us like Himself, to have us forever with Himself; when all God's promises concerning us shall be made good. The reference to the holding fast the confidence of this hope is not subjective, but objective. It signifies a fearless profession of the Christian faith. It is to be "ready always to give an answer to every man that **asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you**, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Just as the Holy Spirit says ...

- [**Hebrews 3:7-10a** > **Psalms 94:8-10a (LXX)** (Psalm 95:7-10a in NASB)] ⁸ *Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, according to the day of irritation in the wilderness: ⁹ where your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works. ¹⁰ Forty years was I grieved with this generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. ¹¹ So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.*

(Compare the Biblical illustration to the message of *hope* found in verse 6 and emphasized by Pink in the comment after that)

(Constable) The verses immediately preceding those quoted (**Ps. 95:6-7a**) are a call to bow down and worship the Lord. That was the writer to the Hebrews' desire for his readers as well.

Ps. 95:6-7a >⁶ *Come, let us worship and fall down before him; and weep before the Lord that made us.* ⁷ *For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*

(Utley) The Masoretic Hebrew text lists the geographical sites of Israel's rebellion as *Meribah* (cf. **Exod.17:7**; Num. 20:13) and *Massah* (cf. **Exod.17:7**; Deut. 6:16). The Septuagint translates them by their etymology (*Meribah*—place of strife and *Massah*—temptation, cf. Heb. 3:9).

Exodus 17:1-7 > ¹*Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink.* ² *So the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water so that we may drink!" And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"* ³ *But the people were thirsty for water there; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why is it that you have brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"* ⁴ *So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What am I to do with this people? A little more and they will stone me!"* ⁵ *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.* ⁶ *Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink."* *And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.* ⁷ *Then he named the place Massah ("temptation") and Meribah ("strife, contention") because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"*

(Pink) The reason Israel murmured at Meribah was because there was no water; they were occupied with their circumstances, they were walking by sight. The crisis they then faced only served to make manifest the state of their hearts, namely, an "evil heart of unbelief." Had their trust been in Jehovah, they would at once have turned to Him, spread their need before Him, and counted on Him to supply it. But their hearts were hardened. A most searching warning was this for the Hebrews. Their circumstances were most painful to the flesh. They were enduring a great fight of afflictions. How were they enduring it? If they were murmuring that would be the outward expression of unbelief within

If > (Strong's) ean

Today if you hear His voice > (Vincent) The Hebrew reads, *O that you would hear his voice today.*

(Precept Austin) This is a well-known **exhortation found in the Talmud**: “Rabbi ‘Eli‘ezer said, “Repent one day before you die.’ His talmidim objected, ‘Does one know in advance the day of one’s death?’ He replied, ‘All the more reason to repent today, lest you die tomorrow! In this way, your entire life will be one of repentance.’ ” (Shabbat 153a) Every Jew knew this Talmudic passage by heart because its opening line served as a call to worship every Sabbath evening in the synagogue with these words: *“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts”*

Harden > (HELPS) properly, to harden; become inflexible (literally "dried out")

(Precept Austin) Notice that *harden* is in the active voice which signifies personal choice or a choice of one's will ... The Greek construction of *Harden* with a negative particle forbids the continuance of an action already going on.

(Wuest Translation) *do not go on hardening your hearts as in the rebellion*

Provoked > (Strong’s) to embitter alongside, i.e. (figuratively) to exasperate -- provoke.

Trial > (Strong’s) to make proof of, to attempt, test, tempt

Test > (Doddridge) "As if they would have made an experiment how much it was possible for me to bear."

Saw > (Robertson) And yet saw

(A reminder > Wiersbe) Let me list these passages for you and explain their sequence in the book of Hebrews. I think you will see how they all hang together and present one message:

- Drifting from the Word—2:1–4 (*neglect* ... we’ll see this word in verse 3) If we do not listen to God’s Word and really hear it, we will start to drift. Neglect always leads to drifting, in things material and physical as well as spiritual.
- **Doubting the Word—3:7—4:13 (hard heart) (OUR PRESENT PASSAGE)** As we drift from the Word, we start to doubt the Word, because faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).
- Dullness toward the Word—5:11—6:20 (sluggishness) We start to get hard hearts, and this leads to spiritual sluggishness, which produces dullness toward the Word. We become “dull of hearing”—lazy listeners!

- Despising the Word—10:26–39 (willfulness) This leads to a spiteful attitude toward the Word to the extent that we willfully disobey God,
- Defying the Word—12:14–29 (refusing to hear) Despising the Word gradually develops into a defiant attitude—we almost “dare” God to do anything!

¹⁰ (Therefore) *I was angry with this generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways’;* ¹¹ *As I swore in My anger, ‘They certainly shall not enter My rest.’*”

I was angry > (Robertson) late compound for extreme anger and disgust. In N.T. only here and verse Hebrews 3:17

(Precept Austin) *prosochthizo* from *pros* = toward or with + *ochtheô* = be sorely vexed) means strong displeasure, amounting to offence. It means to to be very upset over something someone has done.

Always > (Strong’s) ever, unceasingly

Go astray > (Strong’s) to cause to wander, to wander

(Wuest) The word translated “*go astray*” here occurring in the passive voice, means “to be led astray, to be led aside from the right way.” Israel was led astray with respect to the heart, the seat of one’s personal character and of one’s moral and spiritual life. The Hebrew has it, “They are a people of wanderers in heart.”

Numbers 14:20-23 > ²⁰ *So the LORD said, “I have forgiven them in accordance with your word;* ²¹ *however, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.* ²² *Certainly all the people who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice,* ²³ *shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who were disrespectful to Me see it.*

Rest > (Strong’s) *katapauo* > *kata* > down + *pauo* > to make to cease, hinder (to cause to cease, to rest)

(Constable) "Rest" means to cease from labor or to stop working ... For Israel, "rest" meant the enjoyment of all that God had promised the Israelites when they had successfully completed their task of taking possession of the Promised Land, not just entering into the Promised Land. The next generation of Israelites did enter the Promised Land, and experienced rest there because they chose to trust and obey God and therefore subdued the Canaanites

(MacArthur) The basic idea is that of ceasing from work or from any kind of action. You stop doing what you are doing. Action, labor, or exertion is over. Applied to God's rest, it means no more self-effort as far as salvation is concerned. It means the end of trying to please God by our feeble, fleshly works. God's perfect rest is a rest in free grace.

They certainly shall not enter My rest > (Barnes) Margin, As in the original, "if they shall enter." That is, they shall not enter. The word (אם 'im) "if" has this negative meaning in Hebrew, and this meaning is transferred to the Greek word "if".

(Vincent) Lit. if they shall enter, etc. A common Hebraistic formula in oaths. Where God is speaking, as here, the ellipsis is "may I not be Jehovah if they shall enter."

(Darby) We are all aware that the general idea is that Jordan means death and Canaan heaven. But as soon as we enter Canaan, we get conflict. This is not the heavenly places as a place of rest. What characterizes Canaan is conflict, and we get a figure of it in Ephesians 6 — the wrestling, not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, for which we need to have on the whole armor of God.

(Wiersbe) What does Canaan represent to us as Christians today? It represents our spiritual inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:3, 11, 15–23). It is unfortunate that some of our hymns and gospel songs use Canaan as a picture of heaven, and "crossing the Jordan" as a picture of death. Since Canaan was a place of battles, and even of defeats, it is not a good illustration of heaven! Israel had to cross the river by faith (a picture of the believer as he dies to self and the world, Rom. 6) and claim the inheritance by faith. They had to "step out by faith" (see Josh. 1:3) and claim the land for themselves, just as believers today must do.

Numbers 20:8-12 > ⁸ "Take the staff; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and **speak to the rock before their eyes**, that it shall yield its water. So you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and have the congregation and their livestock drink." ⁹ So Moses took the staff from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him; ¹⁰ and Moses and Aaron summoned the assembly in front of the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" ¹¹ Then Moses **raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff**; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank. ¹² But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Since you did not trust in Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, for that reason you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

(Wuest Translation of verses 10-11) *Because of this I was angry with this generation, and I said, Always are they being led astray in their heart. And they themselves did not have an experiential knowledge of my paths. In conformity with which fact I placed myself under oath in my anger. They shall not enter my rest.*

¹² ***Take care, brothers and sisters, that there will not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.***

(View this verse with a focus on the warning above ... "why" were some of the children of Israel not allowed to go into the Promised Land? What did we discover above?)

(Constable) Note again that those to whom the writer addressed this epistle were believers: "brethren." Their danger was apostasy, departure from God, not failure to come to God in saving faith.

Take care > (Strong's) to look (at), behold, beware, lie, look (on, to), perceive, regard, see, sight, take heed.

(HELPS) properly, to *see*, be *observant* (watchful).

(Utley) (The Greek grammar indicates this to mean) continue to be watchful!

Brothers and sisters > (Pink) The introducing here of this blessed and tender title of God's saints is very searching. Those unto whom the apostle was writing, might object, "The scripture you have cited has no legitimate application to us; that passage describes the conduct of unbelievers, whereas we are believers." Therefore, does the apostle again address them as "brethren;" nevertheless, he bids them "take heed." They were not yet out of danger, they were still in the wilderness.

Evil > (Strong's) *apistia* > toilsome, bad. Usage > evil, bad, wicked, malicious, slothful.

(Robertson) *Apistias* is more than mere unbelief, here rather disbelief, refusal to believe, genitive case describing the evil heart marked by disbelief which is no mark of intelligence then or now

Unbelieving > (HELPS) the negated form of *pistós*, "faithful"

(Newell) Unbelief is not inability to understand, but *unwillingness* to *trust*... it is the will, not the intelligence, that is involved

(Wuest) This evil heart of unbelief of which the writer speaks, and which he suspects is found in some of his readers, is a heart in which the evil of unbelief is present, not in a passive or latent state, but in an active, pernicious condition. The attitude of these Hebrews toward the New Testament was not one now of a passive neglect, but one of an active opposition, which attitude the writer was afraid would result in a deliberate and final rejection of the New Testament.

(Spurgeon wrote quite a long essay on this subject ... let me give you his bold points on what is lost if a Christian moves into this position of unbelief:)

1. You will lose your joy
2. You will lose your assurance
3. You will lose your fruitfulness
4. You will lose your purity
5. You will lose your influence
6. You will lose your power in prayer

Falls away > (HELPS) to lead away, to depart from

(Wiersbe) ... But every believer is tempted to give up his confession of Christ and go back into the world system's life of compromise and bondage.

(Constable) We are not saved by our good works, and we do not lose our salvation by our bad works (i.e., failing to persevere faithfully in the faith). "Justification" is a legal verdict that God renders, in which He declares the believing sinner forgiven, and He never rescinds that verdict.

(Wuest Translation on verse 12) *Take heed constantly, brethren, lest there be in any one of you a heart perniciously evil with unbelief in standing aloof from the living God,*

¹³ **But encourage one another every day, as long as it is still called "today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

(Pink opens this last section of Hebrews 3 with this comment) There are two great basic truths which run through Scripture and are enforced on every page: that God is sovereign, and that man is a responsible creature; and it is only as the balance of truth is preserved between these two that we are delivered from error. The Divine sovereignty should not be pressed to the exclusion of human responsibility, nor must human responsibility be so stressed that God's sovereignty is either ignored or denied.

Encourage one another > (Uteley) (Greek grammar) This is to be a continuous action

As long as it is still called "today," > (Vincent) Lit. so long as the to-day is being named. The article points to the former expression - the "to-day"

Hardened > (Guthrie) "A hardened attitude is not a sudden aberration, but a habitual state of mind."

(Wuest Translation of verse 13) *but be constantly exhorting one another daily, so long as the aforementioned Today is being announced, lest any of you be hardened through the stratagem of this sin;*