

Watch Out!
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Hebrews 3:7-15

Opening Discussion: What are some warning signs we all encounter every day? If you could have warning signs for your SPIRITUAL LIFE, what would they be? (Use the warning signs we see each day to start your thinking.)

Back in chapter two the writer of Hebrews gave a warning to followers of Christ about the danger of DRIFTING from Him. Today it's a similar warning. It's written primarily to believers, but it could apply to both believers and non-believers. If you remember only two words today, remember: HARDENED HEART.

Big Ideas:

- “Hard heads”, “hurried lives”, and “hurting people” can lead to “hard hearts.”
- On the other hand, the closer we are to Jesus the softer our heart for His voice and His will.
- Friends don't let friends develop a “hardened heart.”

- So far in Hebrews the theme is: Jesus is SUPREME over everything that came before Him.
- Greater than the prophets; greater than angels; and in this passage; greater than Moses. Moses was a BIG DEAL to these first century Jewish people who had become Christians.
- For good reason they revered Moses for his faithfulness to God. But, looking up to Moses wouldn't give them the supernatural power for the abundant life as a Christian.
- That comes from looking to Jesus. Verse one of chapter three is the ACTION STEP:

Hebrews 3:1 (NIV)

3 Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.

- Your translation may say “consider” Jesus. The NIV because it makes it even stronger: “fix your thoughts” on Jesus.
- Fixing our thoughts on Jesus daily is the remedy to the warning in verses seven through 15.
- In verses one through six the writer makes that comparison between Jesus and Moses.
- Moses was faithful...but Jesus' faithfulness to God is greater because it provides salvation.

Hebrews 3:7–11 (ESV)

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

8 “Today, if you hear his voice,
8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,

9 where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.

10 Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.’

11 As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’ ”

- In these verses the writer quotes Psalm 95. **What historical story is he describing?**
- Verses seven and eight say not to harden our hearts when God is speaking to us. The Greek word for harden means to be “stubborn.” **In your mind’s eye can you picture a stubborn, strong willed child? When the parent is speaking and that kid doesn’t want to hear it what do they often do?**
- **What did the children of Israel continually do as Moses led them to the promised land?**
- **Why was it OUTRAGEOUS that the Israelites (of all people) would rebel against God? How are we today often like the children of Israel in the wilderness?**
- **Do you reward a stubborn, disobedient child with gifts? What DO they need?**
- **Do you remember God’s punishment for those rebellious Israelites?** (See 3:11 and Numbers 14)
- The example of the children of Israel shows us, “hard heads” can lead to a “hardened heart.”
- **What do you think it means to develop a “hardened heart” as a follower of Christ?**
- **How do you think a Christian’s heart can become hardened?**
- Verse twelve gives us some insight into how our hearts can become hard:

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

- The word “brothers” indicates this is written to followers of Christ. “Fall away from the living God” isn’t losing salvation, but losing the blessings of close relationship with Jesus.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

Believers who doubt God’s Word and rebel against Him do not miss heaven, but they do miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today, and they must suffer the chastening of God.

- Verse 12 basically says “check your heart” for some bad spiritual “symptoms.”
- Is my heart “evil?” Here’s a test. When I honestly look at my thoughts and my actions, if God is disappointed and Satan is thrilled, I’ve succumbed to an EVIL HEART.
- Symptom number two: An “unbelieving heart.” Though God has been faithful to me over and over again, I doubt His promises and that he will do what’s best for me.
- In other words, though He’s been faithful in the past, I don’t trust Him for tomorrow.
- That’s exactly how the children of Israel acted. *“Yes, you freed us from slavery. Yes, you parted the Red Sea. Yes, you guided us with a fire by night and a cloud by day. Yes, you fed us food from nowhere. But, I don’t think you’ll take care of us tomorrow!”* Evil, unbelieving hearts! **And once the grumbling starts with a few, what always happens?**
- The good news is that can work in the other direction. When we are surrounded by believers who love us, we’re less likely to develop a HARD HEART. Look at verse 13.

13 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.

- Sin is “deceitful” and Satan is the great deceiver!
- Satan will say, *“This isn’t really a sin...and besides, no one has to know.”*
- **If someone is doing something they know is wrong but they don’t want to give it up, what is their demeanor like?** Can you say “defensive!” Chip on their shoulder!
- Those little hidden sins, if left unchecked and unconfessed begin to harden our hearts toward God and His will.

Dave Guzik writes about the deceitfulness of 'hidden sin' in our lives:

"What you cannot see or sense is that your hidden sin hardens your heart. As your heart becomes harder, you become less and less sensitive to your sin. You become more and more distant from Jesus. And your spiritual danger grows every day."

- The word "exhort" one another may be different in your translation, what do you have?
- The NIV renders it: *"But encourage one another daily...so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."* Fellow believers encouraging each other. **What is that describing?**
- **How does it help to have some good, honest friends when you are being deceived?**
- Usually, the first sign of a hardening heart is distance from other Christians.
- Let me say a word about HURTING PEOPLE. Bad things do happen to good people.
- Sometimes our hearts become hard when we experience tough times. Instead of pressing into to God we pull away.

Dave Guzik writes:

"We often say our hearts become hard because of what others or circumstances do to us. But the fact is that we harden our own hearts in response to what happens to us."

- When life is at its toughest, we need Christian brothers and sisters the MOST.
- Being alone with our evil, unbelieving thoughts can lead to a hard heart.
- Hanging out with cynical unbelieving people can lead to a hard heart.
- Isolating ourselves with the pain in our lives can lead to a hard heart.
- But, getting together with other followers of Christ around the "campfire" of God's word can warm us all up and soften a hard heart.
- Verse 13 is a command: We are to ENCOURAGE each other every day to prevent hard hearts. Am I sensitive to reach out in love to someone who is drifting or hurting?
- If they've been absent from the group they may need some love and encouragement.
- By the way, that's encouragement --- NOT finding fault! There IS a difference!

- **So, how do you think we can keep from developing a "hard heart?"**
- The closer we are to God and His people, the softer our hearts are FOR God and His people.
- The more obedient we are to God's word, the more our hearts are TUNED to His will.
- How do we stay close?
 - Spend time with God
 - Spend time with God's word
 - Spend time with God's people
- The challenge can be HURRIED LIVES. Hurried lives can lead to hard hearts.
- Our time with God needs to be unhurried, quiet, and intimate...just you, Him, and His word.
- Think about it as the difference between savoring a leisurely dinner and choking down a Happy Meal at 60 miles an hour.
- I know it's a challenge! It is for me. But we have to quiet ourselves in order to hear His voice and that takes time.

So, What's the Takeaway?

Verses 14 and 15 give us a final reminder:

14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15 As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

Some good questions to ask ourselves this week:

- *“How’s my heart?” “Are my thoughts and actions pleasing to God or pleasing to Satan?”*
- *“Though He’s been so faithful to me in the past, am I doubting God for tomorrow?”*
- *“When I’m going through a tough time am I ISOLATED with my thoughts, or INSULATED by Christian brothers and sisters gathered around me?”*
- *“Is my time alone with God like enjoying a feast, or choking down a Happy Meal?”*
- *“Am I growing closer with God’s people, or pulling away?”*

Remember...

A “hard head” and a “hurried life” can lead to a “hard heart”