

Readings

Scripture

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “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.’”

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

¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

- Hebrews 3:7-19 (*English Standard Version*)

Reflection

What is hardness of heart? Its character is exposed in the divine response to the clamor of the assembly contemplating violence: “Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites. The Lord said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?” (Numbers 14:10b-11). Hardness of heart signifies treating the Lord with contempt; it is the refusal to believe in the Lord; it is choosing to listen to human voices of despair rather than listening to the voice of God.

- William L. Lane, *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment* (p. 63-64)

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

James 5:7-11 (*English Standard Version*)

Sermon Outline

Entering Rest
Hebrews 3:7-19

Consider Jesus
Brad Anderson

The warning of a close friend can help prevent a hard heart. (Hebrews 3:12)

What was contained in the warnings given by the close friend?

A negative example: How did the Israelites respond to Moses?

- What was their story? (Hebrews 3:7-11)
- What were the consequences? (Hebrews 3:16-19)

A positive encouragement: How will you respond to Christ?

- I am concerned for YOU... (Hebrews 3:12)
- You need to look out for one another, daily... (Hebrews 3:13)
- We need to remember the original agreement... (Hebrews 3:14-15)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- What movie or scene in a movie best captures the thought, “The warning of a close friend can help prevent a hard heart...”?
- Do you find it easier in relationships to remain silent when you should talk or talk when you should remain silent?
- When have you been helped by the words of a close friend? How did you respond to their advice? What risks and considerations are borne by the person who chooses to speak truth into a difficult situation?
- To what incident does the quote from Psalm 95 refer in Hebrews 3:7-11? (See Numbers 13-14) How did the people of Israel harden their hearts? With what results? What does it mean to turn away from the Living God? How is this past example used to press home the need for faithfulness among the congregation in the book of Hebrews? For us today?
- What role does the Christian community play in keeping us true to God? (Hebrews 3:13) What will be the outcome of faithfulness? (Hebrews 3:14-18)
- What does it mean to “enter into God’s rest”? (Hebrews 3:11, 18-19; Hebrews 4:1-11; Matthew 11:28-30)