

The Dangers of a Hardened Heart | Hebrews 3:1-15 | 2/2/2020

- Introduction
 - As we looked last, we had a warning against neglect, that we were warned not to neglect God's word so that we do not drift away.
 - In our passage today we again see another warning from our Hebrew writer, we have a warning against unbelief and the hardening of our hearts.
 - He uses the Israelites as an example to both the originally intended audience of the book of Hebrews and also for us today
 - We will also see the importance of standing firm in our faith and also having faith that endures.
 - Our faith should not be so weak that with a slight breeze of discomfort that we abandon our faith, but instead we can withstand the strongest of storms because of our faith.
- **Do not harden your hearts like those before you | Hebrews 3:7-11**
 - **Read Hebrews 3:1-11**
 - In chapter 2 we were warned about neglecting the Word of God, in Chapter 3 we are warned again.
 - **God inspired this passage of Scripture to warn us against the hardening of our hearts which causes us to neglect God's word and being unwilling to let his Spiritual truths take hold in our lives.**
 - **This is a warning against unbelief in the truth of God, the truth of his Word and the truth of his sovereignty.**
 - The plight of the Israelites
 - He uses this passage of Old Testament Scripture from Psalms 95 to warn us of how we are NOT supposed to act.
 - He uses the example of the Israelites who were wandering around in the wilderness.
 - The Israelites whom God delivered from the hand of the Egyptians had witnesses God's might, his power and also his grace and mercy. They saw all the plagues and they saw what he had done to part the waters.
 - Yet even through all of that they still had disbelief towards God, they complained because of water, because of food and numerous other things.
 - These people were showing their extreme lack of faith in God, which culminated when they didn't go into the Promised Land that God had given them.
 - **So because of their disobedience God would not let them enter there, they wondered around the wilderness for 40 years until that generation died off.**
 - **This is not the Faith that we need to have.**
 - **Warning to prevent others from repeating the same mistakes.**
 - This passage of Scripture shows us what happened to those from history, those that made poor decisions and the outcome they had because of them.
 - This is why knowing history is so important, because we learn from history from what happened to others before us. Because history does repeat itself.
 - **If we hear God's voice, we must not harden our hearts.**
 - We know that God speaks, he has always spoken as we saw in the first verses of Hebrews.
 - His voice is in the Bible, the preaching of the Gospel, in our own consciences, and in many other ways that God reveals to us his truths.
 - So this is not new, but we are **warned of how we are to respond when we do hear God's voice.**

- **We are warned about hardening our hearts**
 - **To harden our hearts when used in this context means to cloud our ability to perceive and understand what God has shown us, what God has told us.**
 - **It is being callous, just like how a callous on your hand causes you to no longer feel as you once did without them, the same way our hearts become calloused.**
 - We cannot feel and understand what God is saying to us.
 - For us to listen and truly embrace what God is telling us we must not have hardened hearts.
 - **A hardened heart cannot understand spiritual truth**
 - **Even Christians can have hardened hearts at times.**
 - One might think well only the lost can do that well they do but so can a Christian.
 - The lost certainly can have hardened hearts and that is likely why it may seem that the spiritual truth of God bounces off of them, why they are not receptive.
 - **A Christian can harden their hearts to the truths and the Word of God, so they do not let it take hold in their lives.**
 - However, a Christian will not remain in this state permanently.
 - **What is like to “harden your heart”?**
 - **How is possible for one to believe and know God, yet still harden their heart?**
- **The hardened hearts of the Israelites.**
 - God has used the example of the Israelites as a warning to us of what happens to those that have hardened hearts.
 - Read 7-9
 - **The Israelites who had received the grace and mercy of God to have been delivered from the Egyptians and were going to the Promised Land still repeatedly showed their lack of faith in God.**
 - The Israelites, when they were wondering in the desert, complained repeatedly to Moses and to God because they were in want.
 - **It wasn't just their needs that was the problem it was the condition of their hearts that they didn't have the faith to believe that God would take care of them.**
 - **They didn't go to Moses and God in a humble way, but instead it was that of a child who wasn't getting what they wanted.**
 - They even said that they would be better off to return to Egypt.
 - **They rebelled against God on several occasions even after all that God had done for them.**
 - So not only were they complaining but they completely disrespected God at mount Sinai.
 - That is when Moses went up the mountain to obtain the Ten Commandment, and when he came down (the first time) he witnessed the people worshipping a golden calf.
 - How could they do this after all that God had done for them?!
 - Their rebellion reached a tipping point when they would not enter the Promised Land.

- Likely the biggest mistake that the Israelites made was when God led them to the Promised Land the first time and they chose instead of having faith in God, to turn and leave.
- **Their faith was tested and they showed how lacking in faith they were.**
 - Through this God was testing his people, will they have faith and believe that I can do all things? Or will they do as the Israelites did and harden their hearts so they could not even see the truth that was right in front of them.
 - God tested the Israelites and tests us today, will we show our faith in God or instead will we harden our hearts and ignore his truths.
- **God is warning us with this passage of Scripture to not repeat the mistakes of the Israelites. We must not harden our hearts but instead open them so they can fully absorb his truths.**
- There are four things according to Jesus that happen when our hearts are hardened
 - **Mark 8:13-21**
 - **Our sight is hindered**
 - We cannot see the truth that is right in front of us.
 - Even though we can see perfectly well the things that God has given us, if we harden our hearts we cannot see what is right in front of us.
 - God is showing us his Spiritual truths, will we be ready to see them?
 - **Example?**
 - **We lack the ability of understanding.**
 - A hardened heart cannot understand spiritual truth.
 - God is constantly showing and giving us his truth in his Word, in our conscience, our hearts and through others.
 - But we if have a hardened heart we will not be able to understand what God is telling us.
 - **Example?**
 - **Our hearing is hindered.**
 - With a hardened heart we choose not to listen.
 - Like a child who doesn't want to hear the instruction from their parents and tunes them out, so does one who hardens their heart to God.
 - **Example?**
 - **We cannot remember what God has done for us.**
 - With a hardened heart we forget what God has done for us, all the blessings and all the times he was there for us in our trials
 - We forget just as the Israelites forgot what God had done for them.
 - **Example?**
 - **If we find ourselves losing our vision, our understanding, our hearing and the inability to remember what God has done for us, then we have hardened our hearts towards God.**
- Our hearts must be open and willing to be receptive to the Word of God.
 - As Christians we must be willing to open our hearts to God
 - We must choose to turn from our indifference and open our hearts to be receptive to God and have complete faith in Him.
- **Have you experienced a hardened heart? How did that affect your relationship with God?**
- **We are warned about a consistent pattern of rebellion**
 - Read 10-11

- **So not only is having a hardened heart a bad thing, but we are warned against this being a consistent pattern in our lives.**
- For 40 years the Israelites rebelled against God, it wasn't just a one-time thing, but they were consistent.
 - **Some versions state that they consistently put God to the test, instead of having faith in Him.**
 - God desires our faith in Him to do what is in His will for our lives. He doesn't want us to consistently provoke and test Him, as this shows lack of faith.
- **God said that they always went astray in their hearts.**
 - **We should not take this warning lightly there are great consequences for the Christian and the lost whom are always in a state of having a hardened heart.**
 - The Israelites showed that this lack of faith as a result of a hardened heart wasn't just a Christian who slipped occasionally, but instead it was a character of the people.
 - **They ALWAYS maintained this heart that wouldn't embrace the spiritual truths of God.**
 - **As Christians we must be CERTAIN that this does not describe us.**
 - **If we look at our lives and we live with a hardened heart consistently, we need to really examine the relationship that we say we have with Christ, because we may not truly have one.**
 - A Christian can stumble occasionally, but a lifetime of hardness shows no faith.
 - **This is a warning to be sure that we are truly Christians**
 - If we base our salvation on an external act of a public profession of faith by walking down the aisle but there wasn't anything that truly happened in our hearts, then we should be concerned.
 - **Salvation happens when a person has true saving faith.**
 - True Faith is our belief, trust and confidence that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross for our sins. Was buried and resurrected from the dead and wants to be our Savior and Lord of our lives.
 - This happens in our heart which is where the real US resides.
 - **If our heart is in the right place it then come naturally to our mouths.**
 - Romans 10:9
 - "If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."
 - Our confession from our mouths must be genuine and from the heart.
 - Our hearts must not be hardened so that we can truly believe.
- **The unbelievers hardened heart prevented them from entering God's rest**
 - The Israelites who had a hardened heart, unbelief and lack of faith in God were not allowed to enter into God' rest.
 - **God's rest has more than one meaning, in the Old Testament it was in relation to a promise, for the Israelites it was the Promised Land.**

- However, because of their unbelief God would not allow them to enter into the Promised Land, because they did not have true faith in God.
 - Numbers 14:1-4
 - Numbers 14:21-23
 - Numbers 14:26-35
 - **A hardened heart is a dangerous thing, for the Israelites whom never truly opened their hearts never set foot in the Promised Land.**
- **For the new covenant in the New Testament “rest” has a different meaning, it is instead fulfillment of a promise for having true faith in Jesus Christ.**
 - God’s rest for the Christian is obtained the moment they receive Salvation.
 - We have a promise from God that we will get to spend an eternity with Him in Heaven, we don’t have to work to get it and we can never lose it.
 - This is why it is so critical that we examine our hearts to see if it is hardened.
 - If you always have a hardened heart then how can you enter into God’s rest? How can you have true saving faith?
 - **Do you think there are consequences for the Christian whom hardens their heart?**
- **Encourage each other so that we are not hardened by sin’s deception | Hebrews 3:12-13**
 - Read Hebrews 3:12-13
 - In verse 12 the warning is made clear that we must examine our hearts to be sure that we are not allowing them to be hardened.
 - We have seen and discussed the ramification of a hardened heart.
 - You cannot draw close to God if you are ignoring his Words and his truths.
 - **How can you have true saving faith and believe in your heart in whom Jesus is if it is hardened and you don’t allow yourself to embrace God’s spiritual truths?**
 - **We are called to encourage each other TODAY so that we can look out for one another.**
 - God knows that Satan is very deceptive and that it can be hard at times for Christians to resist.
 - But God is also aware that we are not supposed to do this all on our own, that we all belonging to the same family, the family of God that we must look out and help one another.
 - We are to encourage each other **TODAY** not next week not next month or at some other appointed time but **TODAY** right now.
 - Don’t put it off this has the same significance as the word today did in verse 7 “Today if you hear his voice”
 - We must act NOW and not later.
 - **We must gather together to encourage one another**
 - Hebrews 10:24-25
 - “And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our worship meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

- We gather together in church and small groups for a purpose, so that we can encourage and show love to one another.
 - So that we can worship and learn more about our heavenly Father.
- **What can we do to help each other to not fall into sins deception where our hearts can become hardened?**
- Our perseverance with our walk in Christ shows that we are a true Christian. | Hebrews 3:14
 - ***Read Hebrews 3:14***
 - This verse is about perseverance, what better way to show our companionship with Christ and the genuineness of our Salvation than to persevere in our Christian walk.
 - If we show firmly until the end the same determination that we had when our eyes were first opened. How great the example we show to others when we do this.
 - If we live out our lives in a way that is set aside from the world, one where we live in obedience to God.
- We must not forget the warning | Hebrews 3:15
 - Read Hebrews 3:15
 - **We must not forget the warning. When we hear the voice of God, we must not harden our hearts, but instead open them fully so we can receive God's spiritual truths that he freely gives us because of his grace.**