

Hebrews 3

Verse 1: *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,*

--**Therefore.** . . In light of the fact that Jesus Christ is crowned with glory and honor, and has taken on our flesh and blood to establish an unbreakable bond and make us one with Him.

--The writer then says Christ's taking our flesh and blood, giving aid to the seed of Abraham, and suffering for us has made two things true:

1) We are now ***holy brethren***. Jesus Christ has set us apart and is continually sanctifying us (**2:11, 12, 17**). Holy brethren with Him. Holy brethren with one another.

2) We are also ***partakers of the heavenly calling***. The Greek word for ***partakers*** here (*metochos*) differs from the one used in **2:14**—which refers to involuntary partaking. Here the word has the idea of being *partners* (**Lk. 5:7**), *associates*, or *companions*.

--This would cause the Hebrews to think and ask themselves: *Am I traveling in His company?* To be a companion of the God of Israel was the point of being an Israelite! Leaving Jesus would mean abandoning their true heavenly calling.

--Think of God's companions through the ages: Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Gideon, Esther, Daniel, the disciples, Paul, these Hebrews, and now us!

--As it did for Jesus Christ, being a companion of a heavenly calling will mean adversity on earth, but also meaning in life and glory in heaven.

*Austin-Sparks (The On-High Calling, pg. 9): *"Companionship is something which is tested and sifted through adversity. So if you have an extra lot of testing and of suffering in your relationship with Christ, remember that He is seeking to have us as His closest companions, in fellowship with Himself, not only in His glory, but in His sufferings."**

--Knowing that reality; the writer urges them to ***consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession***.

--To confess Jesus Christ was a big deal for these Hebrews. It meant claiming a crucified Man from Nazareth as the Messiah. It meant an unpopular public baptism. It often meant persecution or martyrdom. But Christ was the great ***Apostle and High Priest***.

--I think the writer here is referencing the messenger and priestly aspects of Moses (apostle) and Aaron (high priest), because of the comparison he is about to make.

Verses 2-6: *who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.*

--What does the writer want the Hebrews to carefully consider? The faithfulness of Jesus Christ in comparison with the faithfulness of Moses. Three things are brought forward.

1) Moses has honor in the house. Jesus has more honor as the Builder of the house **(4)**.

2) Moses is faithful ***in all His house (5)***. Jesus is faithful ***over His own house (6)***.

3) Moses is a servant. Christ is the Son **(5-6)**.

--It is hard for us to understand how much honor was given to Moses by these ancient Hebrews. Even here, the writer says nothing of Moses' faults or failures. In fact, he purposefully describes Moses as the greatest servant in all the house of Israel!

--Moses was born a special baby. He was miraculously preserved. He was given the best of Egypt and left it to be identified with his people. He met God. Led the people out of Egypt. Through the Red Sea. Gave them the law. Oversaw the construction of the tabernacle and the establishment of the priesthood. He was the human servant God used to forge their national identity.

--Even God recognized Moses as a unique servant **(Num. 12:7)**. The Greek word for ***servant*** in **3:5** (*therapon*) is not the typical word used to describe a bondsman or deacon. The word for servant here describes an assistant or steward held in honor, and typically responsible for running the estate.

--Why was Moses' faithfulness important to see? Because Jesus, as the Son, is greater than their greatest and most honored servant. Jesus Christ is the true Apostle and High Priest over all the house of God **(10:21: *having a High Priest over the house of God*)**.

--**(6)** The picture of a ***house*** could include such things as buildings or works produced by those in the house, but the people are what is in focus—***whose house we are*** (**Jn. 14:17; 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:20-22; 4:16; Col. 2:19**). *Think of the English House of Tudor, or Stuart, etc.*

--God's new house, His new people, were made up of Jews and Gentiles in one body.

***1 Peter 2:5: *You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* ***

--Jesus Christ is the Builder of the house Moses played a small role in. Wonderfully, He also rules over that house ***as a Son***—as family, a dearer thought than that of a steward or honored servant.

--To leave Jesus and go back to Moses, to the old material temple and ceremony, was to forsake God's house, God's people, and God's Son—an Apostle and High Priest infinitely greater than Moses! Leaving Jesus was leaving companionship with the God of Israel.

***John 4:21: *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father."* ***

--The writer knew there would always be fierce opposition to a true companionship and confession of Jesus Christ. That is why he exhorts them to ***hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end*** (The writer is doing what he encourages them to do in **2:13**). *Now the writer is going to give an example of those who did not hold firm!*

Verses 7-11: Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

***“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
In the day of trial in the wilderness,
Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,
And saw My works forty years.
Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,
And they have not known My ways.’
So I swore in My wrath,
‘They shall not enter My rest.’”***

--(7) The writer now reminds these Hebrews what the Holy Spirit (The Scriptures are the voice of the Holy Spirit) said of the people of Israel from **Psalms 95**. The Holy Spirit was warning anyone with ears to hear the voice of God.

--What did they need to be warned of? That the failure of the wilderness generation could be repeated! Were they listening to the voice of God, in His Son, through the Holy Spirit?

--(8) The Israelites of the wilderness generation hardened their hearts in their day of trial. A hard heart hardens for the express purpose of rejecting an impression. God’s voice should soften our hearts and make it easier for us to respond properly.

--Truth can only be rejected at the cost of hardening ourselves to Him.

--(9) The writer is reminding them about the generation that wandered in the wilderness for forty years, despite having clearly seen God’s works. *Was this a subtle reference to the fact that it was nearly forty years since the start of the public ministry of Jesus Christ?*

--(10) These Israelites didn’t just go astray in the wilderness. They went astray **in their hearts**. They were therefore distant from Him, and unfamiliar with His **ways**.

--God’s **ways** are the natural outcome of His character. We all recognize how certain people act in certain ways. We say something was “in” or “out” of character for them. God is saying His own people were unfamiliar with His character.

--(11) The outcome was that the wilderness generation never fully entered His rest.

Verses 12-15: Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said:

***“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”***

--(12) **Beware, brethren.** . . Beware! One of the saddest stories in Israel's history was possible to repeat! What is happening here? We must not get distracted. People get confused trying to figure out if the people of the wilderness generation were saved or unsaved. That is not the point!

--The writer is not calling them to double-check whether the blood on the lintel delivered them from Egypt. He is warning these Hebrews to consider how they travel as companions with God. The point is not the salvation of the ancient Israelites, but the result of their evil heart of unbelief.

--Clearly, the wilderness generation included saved and unsaved—Moses, Aaron, and Miriam all died in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb were spared, but the writer makes no mention of them, even though he brings up Joshua shortly. He is not trying to explain which individuals died in faith.

--What is the writer's point? A generation of God's people in the past was led by Moses and Aaron and given by God a promise of a better land, but because of an evil heart of unbelief, they never entered that rest—as summed up at the end (19).

--He sees the Hebrews he is writing to standing on the edge of the promised land like the Israelites at Kadesh Barnea (Num. 13-14; Deut. 1). Except this time, they must leave behind Judaism and follow Jesus Christ. What happened to the generation that rejected faithful Moses? What would happen to them if they rejected faithful Jesus?

--They were the writer's **brethren**, and he was reminding them of their history! *1 Corinthians 10:1-11*

--His warning is that only **an evil heart of unbelief** would cause them to depart from the living God! If they rejected the voice of the Holy Spirit and departed from their confession in Jesus Christ, they would be turning their back on the **living God** for dead religion and miss out on the rest God had for them. *The living God speaks, hears, sees, and acts!*

--(13) The writer desires the exact opposite of the Kadesh Barnea scenario. Instead of scaring one another into disobedience, he challenges them to **exhort one another daily**—by word, example, counsel, sympathy, prayer, etc.

--Do we? If not, why not? The writer is doing exactly what he is challenging them to do.

--He doesn't want to see a single one of them **hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**. By rejecting the impression His Word is meant to make in our lives, we harden ourselves to God and to acting in faith and obedience to His Word. *The Israelites cried about giants, their children as victims, about leadership and other "options" like returning to Egypt.*

--We, too, can easily be deceived into excuses as to why we don't personally obey Jesus' Word in the most practical of ways: prayer, Bible reading, getting baptized, neglecting the gathering of ourselves together, etc.

--An evil heart of unbelief will always result in direct disobedience (4:6). The very opposite of confidently holding fast, firm steadfastness, and rejoicing till the end.

--(14) ***For we have become partakers of Christ.*** . . The Hebrews were now companions with the risen Messiah! Would they move forward confidently holding onto Him? They needed to hold Jesus Christ even tighter than their perceived Israelite heritage! *Questionable following breeds questionable faith. Questionable sanctification breeds questionable justification. Holding doesn't make us saved; it is evidence of salvation.*

--(15) The writer then repeats **Ps. 95:7-8**. Would they hear God's voice and respond? Or would they harden their hearts and turn back? *The writer might even be encouraging them to quote the psalm—to say the literal words to one another.*

--Clearly, he wants them to make a decision **today**. We don't get to choose the day that matters. The Israelite generation had their day, and then it was over. Ultimately, they came to a point where God allowed them to live with the results of their unbelief.

--That said, if we are not willing to follow Christ today and harden our hearts instead, why would we think we would any future day?

*Tozer (And He Dwelt Among Us, pg. 136): *"Unbelief always hides behind three trees. Here they are, 'somewhere else,' 'some other time,' 'somebody else.' Somebody hears a sermon on John 3:16 and says, 'Somewhere else it's true; on somebody else it's true; some other time it's true, but not now.' That is a hideous lie of unbelief."**

--Walking with God means responding to what He is saying to you *today*.

Verses 16-19: *For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

--(16) The writer asks four rhetorical questions. The answer to each is obvious. Finally, he sums up the reason for God's discipline and his warning **(19)**.

--What happened to the people of God back then was happening again right before their eyes! The Hebrews were standing on the edge of God's promise to them in their Messiah, and they were turning their backs on Him in unbelief.

--Everything God had promised them, all the Messianic hope they had held onto for so long, was right in front of their faces!

--Again, the writer says it was ***all who came out***, knowing full well there were exceptions like Joshua and Caleb. His point was their direction as a people and the resulting loss. *I am sure the writer knew that just like back then, the majority of national Israel would reject God, while the minority would respond in faith.*

--(17-18) Who was God angry with? Who sinned and died? Who missed out on God's rest because of disobedience? Those who ignored faithful Moses!

--Departing from the promised land in unbelief made them a source of constant grief and anger to God. And an eleven-day journey (**Deut. 1:2**) turned into forty years of wandering.

--**(19)** What was their issue? Why were they not able to experience all God had for them?

Unbelief. The writer wants the Hebrews to **see** that lost generation. To see their corpses lying in the arid wilderness. What a lesson! What a warning!

--Israel's wilderness wandering *was not* an expression of faith. In fact, the writer skips over it as an abnormality in the hall of faith (**11:29-30**), moving straight from the Israelites passing through the Red Sea to the walls of Jericho falling down.

--**Beware, brethren!** Did those Hebrews see the danger of unbelief?

*John Owen (Hebrews, pg. 75): *"People very rarely say they have committed the sin of unbelief, but God accuses people of this sin more than any other."**

--Do we see the dangers of unbelief?

--Unbelief kept the Israelites from God's rest.

--Unbelief limited the works of Jesus Christ (**Mt. 13:58**).

--Unbelief caused Jesus Christ to marvel (**Mk. 6:6**).

--Unbelief was the cause of many of Jesus' rebukes, even to His own disciples (**Mt. 17:20; 21:25, 32; Mk. 16:11-14; Lk. 24:25**).

--Ultimately, unbelief will keep us from heaven.

John 3:36: He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

--Presently, unbelief will keep us from rest.

3:19: So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.