

M. R. DeHaan points out:

All that Christ could do for the sinner was done at Calvary, and until the sinner stops first at the Cross, He has no access to the Priest. Our Lord in heaven is powerless to do anything for the sinner until he comes first by the way of the Cross of Calvary. That is why Jesus in heaven does not pray for sinners today. His priestly work at the right hand of God is exclusively for saints. He did all He could do for sinners when He died for them, and until they come to Him as their substitute and Saviour, He cannot intercede or pray for them.

p. 51

Hebrews 12:3

Think constantly of Him, enduring all that sinful men could say against Him; and you will not lose your purpose or your courage.

Romans 8:18

In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us.

Hebrews 10:35-37

Don't throw away your trust now--it carries with it a rich reward in the world to come. Patient endurance is what you need if, after doing God's will, you are to receive what He has promised. For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry.

The hymn writer had it right:

Oftimes the day seems long,
 our trials hard to bear,
 We're tempted to complain,
 to murmur and despair;
 But Christ will soon appear
 to catch His bride away,
 All tears forever over in God's eternal day.

Refrain:

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
 Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
 One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
 So bravely run the race till we see Christ.

("When We See Christ" by Esther Kerr Rusthoi. The New Church Hymnal,
 Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #481)

This remarkable letter gives the answer in 2 WORDS:

CONSIDER HIM.

Why all our weakness, all our backsliding, all our ineffectiveness, all our confusion, all our gullibility? Why do so many professing Christians go back to their old ways or turn aside to strange doctrines? Because there is so little occupation with Christ. If all believers would heed the exhortation to consider Him, to set our minds down upon Him in earnest study of His person, character, offices, and ministries, the church of Jesus would go forth, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Dwelling on earthly things our souls turn to clay. Occupied with systems, we run to tangents. CONSIDERING HIM, we become "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

What doth strip the seeming beauty from the idols of the earth?
 Not a sense of right or duty but a sight of peerless worth.
 Tis that look that melted Peter
 Tis that face that Stephen saw,
 Tis that heart that wept with Mary,
 Can alone from idols draw.
 Draw and win and fill completely
 Til the cup o'erflows its brim,
 What have we to do with idols

Since we've companied with Him?

William Barclay points out:

If we are ever to learn Christian truth, a lack-lustre, disinterested, detached glance is never enough; there must be a concentrated gaze in which we gird up the loins of the mind in a determined effort to see its meaning for us.
p. 23

Yes, the ANSWER is to:

"CONTEMPLATE JESUS, THE APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says the first equals:

. . . the One sent forth by God as the supreme Revealer of the Father (1:1, 2), while the second picks up the role just mentioned in 2:17, 18.

Draper speaks on these 2 WORDS in the following way:

He is "the Apostle." This is the only place in the New Testament where Jesus is called "the Apostle." The writer of Hebrews does not call anyone else an apostle. He reserves the title for Jesus. An apostle is one who is sent forth with a task. Jesus was sent forth from God to reveal the heart of God, to reveal God to man. Jesus is the Apostle.
p. 69

Christ Jesus is also our "High Priest." The Latin word for "priest" is pontifex. It means "bridge builder." A priest is a bridge builder, and only Christ Jesus really deserves that title because only he has built the bridge between man and God. Only he has made it possible for us to get to know God. Only he could plead our cause before God and plead God's cause before us. Only he could speak for God and speak for man. He is God's perfect man. He is the "High Priest," the One who built the bridge to span the gap between God and us.
p. 69

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out:

However, with the tabernacle as the back-drop, we have God's "house" in the Old Testament. The situation would be that the tabernacle itself which Moses had constructed was in strict obedience to the divine directions. It was a prophetic testimony. . . .

In Exodus 39 you have the little phrase "AS THE LORD COMMANDED MOSES" occurring 9 TIMES.

Then in the actual setting up of the tabernacle in chapter 40 you have the phrase occurring 8 TIMES.

So in chapters 39 and 40 you have this little phrase occurring 17 TIMES referring to Moses' faithfulness to be very specific in his obedience.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Now the writer is going to show that Christ is superior to Moses. You see, having shown the superiority of Christ over the prophets who spoke for God in the Old Testament, and having shown His superiority over the angels, now he must show that He is superior to Moses because Moses is very important to the Hebrews.

p. 523

Whose house are we talking about here? The word house occurs seven times in the next few verses. It is very important to determine whose house this is. Is it Moses' house? I don't think so. It is God's house. Moses was faithful in God's house. He was called to do a certain thing, and he did it. He was found faithful.

p. 523

English says:

The esteem and reverence in which Moses was held by the Jewish people is not easy for us to conceive today. As high as they held the angels to be in the spiritual realm, they considered Moses to be in the physical economy.

p. 92

Here in the verse we read that Moses was also faithful. This does not mean that he did not make some mistakes, because we know from his biography that his temper caused him to make quite a few mistakes. Is it not wonderful to know that the Lord forgives and cleanses and sees the total picture. And when He summarizes the life of Moses, He summarizes it as one who is faithful.

Hebrews 11:24-26 gives us the key:

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to be suffering ill-treatment with the people of God, than to be enjoying the short-lived pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking forward to the reward.

The hymn writer speaks of GOD'S FAITHFULNESS when he says:

"Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

"Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

("Great is Thy Faithfulness" by T. O. Chisholm. The New Church Hymnal, Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #196)

The greatest joy of all is to anticipate that wonderful day when we will hear from our crucified, risen Savior,

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

We need to recognize the fact that we will never hear those words if we are not faithful to finish the task set before us.

We will never be able to say that we finished if we do not hang in there.

Paul could say it.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

v. 3 For He has been considered worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as He who built the house is having more honor than the house.

Now let us tie these first 3 verses together:

In verse 1 the command is: "contemplate Jesus, the apostle and high priest."

He is characterized in verse 2 as being "faithful to the One who appointed Him."

And now we read in verse 3 that "HE HAS BEEN CONSIDERED WORTHY OF MORE GLORY THAN MOSES."

Christ is seen as the CREATOR of the house

and Moses is a RESIDENT.

Here we have a STATEMENT OF REASON in the argument:

FOR HE, (Christ), HAS BEEN COUNTED WORTHY OF MORE GLORY THAN MOSES, BY SO MUCH AS HE WHO BUILT [it] IS HAVING MORE HONOR THAN THE HOUSE.

J. Vernon McGee points out:

Moses was faithful in God's house, but the Lord Jesus is the one who built the house. He is the Creator; Moses is a creature. There is the difference, my friend. . . .

"Every house is builded by some man [someone]." . . .

"But he that built all things is God." The Lord Jesus is God, and He is the Creator. Moses never made that claim for Himself.
p. 524

Wiersbe points out:

Moses was not sinless, as was Jesus Christ, but he was faithful and obeyed God's will (Num. 12:7). This would be an encouragement to those first-century Jewish believers to remain faithful to Christ, even in the midst of the tough trials they were experiencing. Instead of going back to Moses, they should imitate Moses and be faithful in their calling.

p. 35

The word "house" is used six times in these verses. It refers to the people of God, not to a material building. Moses ministered to Israel, the people of God under the Old Covenant. Today, Christ ministers to His church, the people of God under the New Covenant ("whose house are we," v. 6).

p. 35

Wuest says:

But now, having prepared the ground, the writer comes out boldly with the assertion that Messiah was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, on the basis of and measured by the principle that the one who builds a house has more honor than the house. Messiah built the house of Israel. Moses is a member of that house. Since Messiah has more honor than the house of Israel, it follows that He is worthy of more honor than Moses, for Moses is a member of the house of Israel. Since Messiah is better than Moses, the Testament which He inaugurated must be better than the one Moses was instrumental in bringing in, and for the reason that a superior workman turns out a superior product.

p. 70

Phillips says:

Moses certainly derived glory in God's house, and God did not hesitate to give it to him. The fact that Moses is mentioned by name upward of 700 times in the Bible and that his name appears in every section of the Bible is proof of that.

He was truly one of the cornerstones in God's plans for this world, but it would be ludicrous to magnify a stone, however ornate, important, and key it might be, above the building's designer. Moses was not without his majesty, but he was still a servant and inferior to Christ.

p. 67

The Bible Knowledge Commentary focuses on the tabernacle, which was God's house in the Old Testament, and says:

The "holy of holies" . . . [is] but a shadow of heaven itself where Christ has now gone . . . Moses' fidelity consisted in erecting that shadow house, the tabernacle, so that it could properly prefigure the future order of priestly activity which now has the universe itself as its proper sphere.

Many hold to the view that the "HOUSE" refers to the whole commonwealth of Israel and Moses is but a part, and Christ is the builder.

It has been nearly two thousand years since God tore apart the temple veil, signifying the end of an era which had lasted 1500 years. It is difficult today for us to imagine the difficulty of a Hebrew adjusting to the thought that God had written "finished" over all His religious observances, associations and concepts. A new day had dawned abruptly and completely. The Jew had to face the revolutionary fact that Christ had eclipsed all others and that Calvary spelled the end of the Law.

Phillips says further:

The believer in Christ is also given a heavenly calling, in contrast with the calling of the Hebrew people, which was essentially earthly. In the Old Testament everything had to do with a place; in the New Testament everything has to do with a Person. In the Old Testament, to be in the sphere of blessing, the Jew had to be in the land, . . . In the New Testament, to be in the sphere of blessing we must be "in the Lord." For the Hebrew of old it was a matter of being in Canaan; for us today it is a matter of being in Christ.

p. 66

v. 4 For every house is being built by someone, but the one who built all things is God.

We now have a STATEMENT OF THE 2ND REASON in his argument:

"FOR EVERY HOUSE IS BEING BUILT BY SOMEONE"

"BUT" in contrast:

"THE ONE WHO BUILT ALL THINGS IS GOD."

Christ is the builder of all things, and Moses is part of His building operations.

It is an acceptable premise that when you have order and design, you have a creator; and this universe is built by someone.

"BUT THE ONE WHO BUILT ALL THINGS IS GOD."

The phrase "ALL THINGS" occurs again here, as it did 6 TIMES back in chapter 2.

The Lord Jesus is God, and He is the creator.

Hughes points out:

It was commonly held in ancient thought that an architect is greater than what he builds. So the central point here is that Jesus is superior to Moses because Jesus is the builder, and Moses is part of the house/household.
p. 93

v. 5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant,
for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later;

The argument now expands:

CHRIST as the BUILDER and MOSES as a PART OF THE HOUSE.

CHRIST is OVER THE HOUSE and MOSES is IN IT.

CHRIST is the SON; MOSES the SERVANT.

J. Vernon McGee points out:

Not only is Christ superior to Moses in that He is the Creator and Moses is a creature, but also the best thing that could be said of Moses is that he was a servant of God

--never was he called a son of God. Christ is the Son of God. There is quite a difference between the son in the house and a servant in a house. So Christ is superior to Moses on two counts: Christ is the Creator and He is the Son. This is very important to see.

p. 524

Galatians 3:22-25

But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

G. Campbell Morgan points out:

The writer of this letter is careful not to undermine the authority of Moses, or to minimize it in any way. His argument is intended to show that those who hear the speech of the Son hear something which has yet greater authority than Moses, because it is a final message.

p. 36

Bruce says:

Moses' relation to God's household, then, was that of a servant; Christ's relation to it is that of the Son and heir. Moses administered the household as one who was himself part of the household; Christ rules over the household as the Son whom his Father, the owner of the household, has appointed to exercise this rule.
p. 93

Moses was a voluntary servant. And like the Savior, who emptied Himself taking the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, both were faithful in the accomplishment of their task.

'WELL DONE, MY SUCCESSFUL SERVANT'?

"With quality, not quantity, now serving as my paramount concern, I no longer evaluate my ministry on the basis of success or failure. Instead, I think in terms of faithfulness or unfaithfulness. I look at the parable of the talents and ask myself: for what were the first two servants praised? The size of their return? Their measurable success? Not at all! Their faithfulness is what elicited the Master's acclaim. They were praised because they took what they were given and made the most of it."

--David W. Reid
(in Clergy Journal, Sep 1993)

(From InfoSearch 3.5)

v. 6 But Christ is faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if indeed we keep the confidence firm and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

In contrast to Moses being "faithful in all his house as a servant":

"CHRIST IS FAITHFUL AS A SON OVER HIS HOUSE."

And the writer speaks of his recipients, as well as of himself, when he says:

"WHOSE HOUSE WE ARE."

The writer says we are a part of that house and will manifest it by our holding fast our confidence and the rejoicing of our hope firm until the end.

The writer concludes verse 6 with a **CONDITIONAL PHRASE** that has been disturbing to many:

"IF INDEED WE KEEP THE CONFIDENCE FIRM AND THE BOAST OF OUR HOPE FIRM UNTIL THE END."

Jesus concludes the **SERMON ON THE MOUNT** by saying in Matthew 7:24ff:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

Bruce comments:

The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints has as its corollary the salutary teaching that the saints are the people who persevere to the end. In the parable of the sower the seed sown on the rocky ground made a fair showing at first, but could not withstand the heat of the sun "because it had no root"; and in the interpretation of the parable this is said to refer to people "who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no root in themselves; but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away" (Mark 4:5f., 16f.). This is precisely what our author fears may happen with his readers; hence his constant emphasis on the necessity of their maintaining fearless confession and joyful hope. Christians live by faith and not by sight; but while their hope is in things unseen, it is something to exult in, not to be ashamed of. The waning of the first expectant enthusiasm of these "Hebrews," the apparent postponement of their hope, and various kinds of pressure brought to bear upon them, all combined to threaten the steadfastness of their faith. Hence our author, in deep concern, urges upon them that they have everything to gain by standing fast, and everything to lose by slipping back. He reinforces his warning by appealing to a familiar Old Testament precedent.

pp. 94-95

Hughes says:

But in addition to this, as Jesus' faithful example would suggest, we must faithfully persevere. "And we are his house," concludes the writer, "if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast" (v. 6b). We will find this condition again and again in Hebrews: continuance in the Christian life--holding on--is the test of real faith. "The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints has as its corollary the salutary teaching that the saints are the people who persevere to the end." The writer fears that some in the storm-tossed church will not persevere.

The Holy Spirit thus asks us, Are you persevering? Or, in the jostling tides of life, are you drifting away? Is Christ as dear as the first day you met him--even more dear? Are you holding on to your "courage"? Are you holding on to "the hope of which we boast"? That is, are you proud of the gospel? Was there a time in your life, perhaps with the fresh glow of new faith, when you were proud and courageous for Christ, but now, with the passing of time, your proper pride, your boast, and your courage are gone? If so, God's Word says you must hold on to it.

Focus on--hold on--to Christ, our great, superior apostle and high priest.

p. 95

Romans 4:20, 21

Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

Phillips says:

The writer emphasizes "boldness" and "glorying" in connection with our hope. This was particularly applicable to the new Hebrew believers to whom he was writing because of the danger of their drifting back into a dead Judaism. They needed boldness to overcome the opposition facing them, and they needed to glory in the spiritual benefits which were theirs in Christ--benefits far exceeding those offered under the Law. For us today there is the danger of settling for a second-class Christian life, one devoid of boldness and glorying, a life daunted by foes and haunted by fears. If we "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession," boldness and glorying will follow as a matter of course.

p. 69

Wiersbe says:

The "if" clause (v. 6) needs to be understood in the light of the total context, which is Moses leading Israel out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. The writer is not suggesting that we, as Christians, must keep ourselves saved. This would contradict the major theme of the book, which is the finished work of Christ and His heavenly ministry guaranteeing our eternal salvation (7:14ff). Rather, the writer is affirming that those who hold fast their confidence and hope are proving that they are truly born again.

p. 36

The wandering of Israel in the wilderness is a major topic in this section. Two men in that nation--Caleb and Joshua--illustrate the attitude described in 3:6. Everybody else in Israel over the age of 20 was to die in the wilderness and never enter the Promised Land (see Num. 14:26-38). But Caleb and Joshua believed God and God honored their faith. For 40 years, Caleb and Joshua watched their friends and relatives die; but those two men of faith had confidence in God's Word that they would one day enter Canaan. While others were experiencing sorrow and death, Caleb and Joshua rejoiced in confident hope. As believers, we know that God is taking us to heaven, and we should reveal the same kind of joyful confidence and hope.
pp. 37-38

Draper says:

The phrase "hold fast" is a nautical term. It means "to zero in, to home in on a target." Once this is done, a ship holds its course toward that goal. It keeps on the path. If the Christian does this, it proves he belongs to the house of God. The writer of Hebrews is addressing himself to Hebrew Christians, or at least to Hebrews who professed to be Christians, who had left the Levitical practices of the Hebrew faith and had visibly come over to the Christian faith. Now, because of severe pressure and persecution, some of them were beginning to waver. Some of them were considering going back to the old ways. It was causing much confusion and concern. So the writer presents a test by which we can know if a person is really saved. The test is this--whenever believers come under the persecution, misunderstanding, or whatever the pressure be that society brings upon them, if they hold firm and fast to their confidence and to their hope, they testify they belong to God. They are his house.
pp. 72-73

Once again, the author includes himself in this admonition:

"IF INDEED WE KEEP THE CONFIDENCE FIRM AND THE BOAST OF OUR HOPE FIRM UNTIL THE END."

Hewitt says:

The final proof of Christ's superiority is now given. He is son over his own house and, therefore, is worthy of more glory than the servant. Even though Christ and Moses were both faithful, the position of a son is worthy of more glory than that of a servant, for it carries with it far greater responsibility.
p. 79

Delitzsch says:

Jesus stands related to Moses, as one who has built a house stands related to the house itself; Moses as servant forming part of God's house, whilst Christ as Son is over it.
p. 161

Christ is (or stands) as Son over (God's) house, being not merely faithful as a servant, like Moses, employed in the house, but placed as a Son over it.
p. 162

If the New Testament church of God holds fast (to maintain) the treasure of hope, notwithstanding all the contradictions between the present and the promised future, in the midst of all dangers of offence and falling away prepared for her by the threatenings and allurements of the enemies of the cross, then, and only then, does she continue the house of God, under the faithful and fostering care of Christ, the now exalted only Son of God, her Brother, her Apostle, and her High Priest.
p. 165

Macaulay says:

For there is a confession of Christ which is spurious, shallow, fickle, which is not the work of the Holy Spirit. The test of a true confession is its permanence. Confidence in Christ endures when mere profession of religion gives way before the pressure of temptation, persecution, and affliction.
p. 48

DeHaan says:

On the surface it seems that this verse indicates that the believer can ultimately be lost, for being the house of God is made dependent upon holding fast. However, this passage is not dealing with salvation, but with assurance, confidence and rejoicing in hope. The danger was not that these believers could lose their salvation, but they could lose their assurance, their confidence, their joy, and finally the reward for faithfulness. It is not "if we hold fast our salvation," but if we "hold fast our confidence." And this is in perfect harmony with the central theme of the epistle. These Hebrew Christians were hated and despised, looked upon as the refuse and offscouring of society, and were gravely tempted to go back to the easier path of compromise. If they surrendered their separated position and cut the corners and toned down their testimony, it might save them persecution and criticism. But in doing so they would lose their confidence, hope and assurance. They would put a stop to their growth in grace and like the Galatians slip back into legalism and remain in spiritual infancy.
pp. 52-53

Richards points out:

But now Jesus comes, a greater Person than Moses, with a revelation that moves beyond fragments to wholeness. The implication is clear. Jesus can give us, along with our new identity, a new life-style! Jesus can bring a new way to experience the benefits of the salvation He brings, a way which goes as far beyond the Law as the position of a son is beyond that of a servant.

We have a new identity: sons of God.

Do we also have a new way of life?

p. 31

Pink says:

"If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." As the same thought is, substantially, embodied again in v. 14, we shall now waive a full exposition and application of these words. Suffice it now to say that the Holy Spirit is here pressing, once more, on these Hebrews, what had been affirmed in 2:1, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Let each Christian reader remember that our Lord has said, "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John 8:31).
p. 163

MacArthur says:

How can we know that we are really God's house? By holding **fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end**. This does not mean, as many have misinterpreted, that we are saved if we hang on until the end. We can neither save ourselves nor keep ourselves saved. The meaning is simply that continuance is the proof of reality. We can tell if we are really the house of God because we stay there. The one who falls away never belonged in the first place (cf. 1 John 2:19). Apparently there were many Jews who had fallen away, and it is because of them that the writer of Hebrews gives these words, which both warn and encourage. Some were convinced of the gospel and were on the edge of commitment, but kept falling away. Some, no doubt, had even made an outward profession of faith. But in both cases they fell away from the church, proving they were never a part of it. The true saints persevered, and their perseverance was evidence of their salvation. "If you abide in My word," Jesus said, "then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31). One of the clearest truths of the New Testament is that the Lord keeps those who belong to Him. "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39). Jesus has never lost anyone and will never lose anyone from His household.

This passage says two important things to us. First, we should be sure we are real Christians. "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!" (2 Cor. 13:5). Second, when we know we are in Christ, we should keep our eyes on Him. He is all we need. We are complete in Him.
p. 83

Black says:

As the helmsman of a ship holds on to his course despite difficulties, so the recipients of the Epistle are exhorted to hold on to their boldness and to the boast of their hope.
p. 73

English says:

The writer of the epistle assumes that his readers are "partakers of the heavenly calling" in truth, and calls them "holy brethren"; but he gives this word of warning, lest among his readers there may be some who have not been real in their profession. The warning stands today as strongly as ever. We are of God's house, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." It is a common thing for people to be touched emotionally by the Gospel of Christ and to profess His name, without ever having a heart transaction with the Lord. It is prevalent even today for some to unite with the church organization who are not of the Church of Christ because they have no saving faith, they have not been born again. And so among the Hebrews were some, no doubt, who adapted themselves to the "new" faith but were never actually recipients of God's "adoption of children by Jesus Christ." To all such, of every century of Christianity, this sentinel beckons: "whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." We are not to be stony ground hearers of the Word, nor thorny ground hearers, but like fertile ground wherein the Word takes root and bears fruit.
pp. 98-99

CHURCH ACTIVITY

Visitor: Pastor, how many of your members are active?

Pastor: They all are! Some are active for the Lord and the rest are active for the devil!

(From InfoSearch 3.5)

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.

--James Baldwin

Ninety percent of all failures result from people quitting too soon.

--Unknown

(From InfoSearch 3.5)

With sixty seconds' worth of distance run, Yours is the earth and everything that's in it, And, what is more, you'll be a man, my son.

--Rudyard Kipling

Victory belongs to the most persevering.

--Napoleon

Little strokes fell great oaks.

--Unknown

It has been my observation that most people get ahead during the time that others waste.

--Unknown

(From InfoSearch 3.5)

J. Vernon McGee points out:

. . . if we are sons of God and if we are partakers of the heavenly calling, we will be faithful and we will hold fast. This is that proof we are of God's house.

p. 524

M. R. DeHaan points out:

Remember, therefore, our salvation depends upon His faithfulness, but our rewards are dependent upon our faithfulness in holding fast our confidence, and rejoicing in hope firm unto the end.

p. 53

Revelation 3:11

'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.'

The exhortation has a certain application to all believers. If we cease to glory in Christ, we give evidence of failure to apprehend the privileges of our heavenly calling. Let us beware of attaching undue importance to the things that are seen and loosening our grasp upon the invisible and eternal. We need to consider the apostle and priest of our confession if we are to hold fast the boldness and glorying of our hope. We need to stir our souls to await his return with ardent expectation.

Andrew Murray points out:

Steadfastness, perseverance--this is indeed the great need of the Christian life. There is no question that exercises the earnest minister of the gospel in our days, as in early times, more deeply than what may be the reason that so many converts grow cold and fall away. And what can be done that we may have Christians who can stand and conquer? How often does it not happen--Both after times of revival and special effort, and also in the ordinary work of the church--that those who for a time ran well, got so entangled in the business or the pleasure of life, the literature, or the politics, or the friendships of the world, that all the life and the power of their profession is lost. They lack steadfastness. They missed the crowning grace of perseverance.

In a poem called "Portrait Completed" from Sitting by My Laughing Fire . . .
by Ruth Bell Graham we read:

As the portrait is unconscious
of the master artist's touch,
unaware of growing beauty,
unaware of changing much,
so you have not guessed His working
in your life throughout each year,
have not seen the growing beauty
have not sensed it, Mother dear.
We have seen and marveled greatly
at the Master Artist's skill,
marveled at the lovely picture
daily growing lovelier still;
watched His brush strokes
change each feature
to a likeness of His face,
till in you we see the Master,
feel His presence, glimpse His grace;
pray the fragrance of His presence
may through you seem doubly sweet,
till your years on earth are ended
and the portrait is complete.

Mother's Day, 1940
Portrait completed, November 8, 1974
p. 80

(The Essential Abraham Lincoln by John Gabriel Hunt)

I expect to maintain this contest until successful, or till I die, or am
conquered, or my term expires, or Congress or the country forsake me; and I
would publicly appeal to the country for this new force were it not that I fear
a general panic and stampede would follow, so hard it is to have a thing
understood as it really is.

(Abraham Lincoln in his Letter to Secretary William H. Seward, Executive
Mansion, June 28, 1862)
p. 272

(Carpe Diem by Tony Campolo)

Then I went on to recite a poem by Shel Silverstein:

LISTEN TO THE MUSTN'TS

Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child,
 Listen to the DON'TS
 Listen to the SHOULDN'TS
 THE IMPOSSIBLES, the WON'TS
 Listen to the NEVER HAVES
 Then listen close to me--
 Anything can happen, child,
 ANYTHING can be.

p. 95

(The Book of Virtues by William J. Bennett)

Perseverance is an essential quality of character in high-level leadership. Much good that might have been achieved in the world is lost through hesitation, faltering, wavering, vacillating, or just no sticking with it.
 p. 527

Sam Adams saw it thus in the gestation period prior to our birth as a nation. "The necessity of the times," he proclaimed in 1771, "more than ever, calls for our utmost circumspection, deliberation, fortitude, and perseverance."
 p. 528

Try, Try Again

'Tis a lesson you should heed,
 Try, try again;
 If at first you don't succeed,
 Try, try again;
 Then your courage should appear,
 For, if you will persevere,
 You will conquer, never fear;
 Try, try again.

p. 532

(Sacred Honor: A Biography of Colin Powell by David Roth)

Powell fared well and kept a hopeful spirit despite the less-than-pleasant circumstances. When others were about to drop, Powell seemed able to squeeze out a smile, tell a joke, and drive on.

p. 46

(On Being a Servant of God by Warren W. Wiersbe)

Dr. V. Raymond Edman used to tell the Wheaton (Illinois) College students, "It's always too soon to quit." On the flyleaf of my copy of his book The Disciplines of Life, Dr. Edman wrote, "Remember always to keep chin up and knees down!" Good counsel!

p. 17

G. Campbell Morgan says:

The speech, then, of the Son is proved final, as we contemplate the superb greatness of Moses as a servant, marked by fidelity; and then turn our eyes to the One Who, as Son, is at once Builder of the House, and Ruler of the House. Through Him God today speaks to man.

p. 44

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

Out of one of the darkest hours of her life--the tragic drowning of her husband--a young mother proclaimed through her tears, "'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus . . . and I know that thou art with me, wilt be with me to the end." As Louisa Stead, her husband and their little daughter were enjoying an ocean side picnic one day, a drowning boy cried for help. Mr. Stead rushed to save him but was pulled under by the terrified boy. Both drowned as Louisa and her daughter watched helplessly. During the sorrowful days that followed, the words of this hymn came from the grief stricken wife's heart.

Soon after this Mrs. Stead and her daughter left for missionary work in South Africa. After more than 25 years of fruitful service, Louisa was forced to retire because of ill health. She died a few years later in Southern Rhodesia. Her fellow missionaries had always loved "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus" and wrote this tribute after her death:

We miss her very much, but her influence goes on as our five thousand native Christians continually sing this hymn in their native language.

Out of a deep human tragedy early in her life, Louisa Stead learned simply to trust in her Lord. She was used to "the praise of His glory" for the remainder of her life. Still today, her ministry continues each time we sing and apply the truth of these words:

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His word, just to rest upon His promise, just to know, "Thus saith the Lord."

O how sweet to trust in Jesus, just to trust His cleansing blood, just in simple faith to plunge me 'neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus, just from sin and self to cease, just from Jesus simply taking life and rest and joy and peace.

I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee, Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend; and I know that Thou art with me, wilt be with me to the end.

Chorus: Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I've proved Him o'er and o'er! Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus! O for grace to trust Him more!

p. 220

v. 7 Therefore just as the Holy Spirit is saying, "Today if you hear His voice,

Isaiah 30:21

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Psalm 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."

1 Samuel 3:9

So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

Black sets the stage for this next section with the statement:

The faithfulness of Moses makes him think of the unbelief of those whom Moses led into the wilderness. The one thought leads naturally to the other.
p. 75

Richards says:

Quoting Psalm 95:7-11, the writer focuses our attention on an attitude that characterized the relationship to God of a particular Old Testament generation. These men and women heard God's voice but hardened their hearts and refused to respond. As a result, God was forced to declare, "They shall never enter My rest" (v. 11). In this context, rest clearly refers to the land of Canaan, promised to Israel by God, toward which God led His people after releasing them from their slavery in Egypt (see Ex. 3-11).
pp. 32-33

DeHaan says:

All of this section, except the first word "Wherefore," is a parenthesis, to serve as a warning in view of what had preceded it. The quotation is from the ninety-fifth Psalm. In this psalm the writer exhorts the people of God to yield Him full obedience.

p. 57

Hewitt says:

Moses was faithful but not all those who left Egypt with him followed his example or believed his testimony. Their unbelief was the forerunner of their destruction. Christ, who is far superior to Moses, was also faithful, but many of His followers were not following His example and because of apathy and unbelief were in danger of losing true spiritual blessings. To these a solemn warning is given to show that unbelief leads to disobedience, and unbelief and disobedience to apostasy, and that the inevitable result is the loss of God's rest.

p. 80

Owen observes:

The voice of God is the signification of His will, which is the rule of all our duty and obedience.

p. 47

Draper reminds us:

There is a day set forth, a time declared, when we are to hear God's voice. "To-day if ye will hear his voice" (3:7). Not yesterday, for yesterday is gone. Yet many of us dwell on the mistakes, the defeats, and the failures of yesterday as if they were final, as if we have no recourse, no direction in which to go. We still dwell on yesterday, but the Holy Spirit did not say, "Yesterday if you will hear my voice."

Nor did he say, "Tomorrow." Tomorrow has not dawned for us, and it may not. None of us has assurance that tomorrow is coming. Yet how much we live in the future. We are always prepared to put things off until some later time. But the Holy Spirit does not say that. He says, "Today." There is a time, a day set forth.

p. 78

Wiersbe points out:

This long section is the second of the five exhortations in this epistle. In the first exhortation (2:1-4), the writer pointed out the danger of drifting from the Word because of neglect. In this exhortation, he explains the danger of doubting and disbelieving the Word because of hardness of heart. It is important that we understand the background of this section, which is the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and their experiences of unbelief in the wilderness.

p. 38

Phillips points out:

The writer now begins the second great warning of Hebrews. The first warning had to do with disregarding the salvation of God; this one has to do with disbelieving the sufficiency of God.

p. 69

Hughes points out:

To set forth his concern, the writer did what preachers often do--he appropriated a passage of Scripture that eloquently framed his thoughts--Psalm 95:7-11. Every Jew knew this 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" (Hebrews 3:7, 8; quoting Psalm 95:7, 8). These solemn words were intoned week after week, year after year, as a call to carefully listen to the voice of God. Hebrew ears perked up at their sound.

pp. 98-99

Griffith Thomas says:

Now commences the second interjected warning which extends from 3:7 to 4:13. It is concerned with the peril of disbelief (see 2:1-4, the peril of drifting). After what has been said concerning faithfulness and continuance, the Christians are urged not to fall short of what God offers them.

p. 43

William Barclay says:

The writer to the Hebrews has just been striving to prove the unique supremacy of Jesus, and now he leaves argument for exhortation. He presses upon his hearers the inevitable consequence of this unique supremacy. If Jesus is so supremely and uniquely great, then it follows that complete trust and complete obedience must be given to Him. If they harden their hearts and refuse to hear His voice and to give Him their obedient trust the consequences are bound to be very terrible.

p. 27

(The Tribute by Dennis Rainey with David Boehl)

I think of the "Peanuts" cartoon in which Charlie Brown said, "Nothing echoes like an empty mailbox." If you're like me, you look forward to seeing what comes in each day's mail.

p. 252

(God Works the Night Shift by Ron Mehl)

Maybe, on occasion, you might find yourself saying, "God seems to be working overtime, holidays, and weekends in others. But if He's working in my life, it's like putting a stopwatch on a glacier. It's like watching ivy grow on the side of a brick building. It's so slow I can't tell if anything is really happening." At times it seems everything in your life is sheer boredom while in others' lives it's a great adventure. Others speak of God doing this and that, teaching them profound truths, giving them songs in the night and whispering words of wisdom and comfort. But for you . . . well, it's been kind of dark and quiet.

p. 19

v. 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion in the day of testing in the wilderness,

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

To drive home his call to fidelity and to warn of the consequences of unbelieving infidelity, the author referred to the classic failure of Israel at Kadesh Barnea which led to their 40-year detour in the wilderness. They were marked by tragic loss and defeat. The readers were not to repeat such an experience in their own lives.

The text was taken from Psalm 95. Verses 7-11 of that psalm are quoted here. They are highly appropriate in a context that is concerned with worship and priestly activity.

Hays in his master's thesis from Dallas Seminary The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews 3 points out:

Hebrews 3:7-19 is one of the six warning passages within the book of Hebrews, all of which have traditionally presented thorny problems to the interpreter. Hebrews 3:7-19 refers back to Israel's disobedience at Kadesh-Barnea. While Israel was disobedient on several occasions, her refusal to enter the land was a culmination of her past grumblings; and to this event the writer of Hebrews refers. Hebrews 3:17, 18 clarifies that it was disobedience at Kadesh-Barnea that was referred to and not another time of disobedience. The account of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea is recorded in Numbers 14. Through Moses God had delivered the people of Israel up out of Egypt and he had led them to the Promised Land. The people had experienced the Passover of the death angel, the parting of the Red Sea, the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai and the presence of God's shekinah glory. They had grumbled often and had climaxed their discontent by refusing to enter the land which God gave them. Chapter 13 records the report of the spies sent in to scout the land. In Numbers 14:1-4 they express their fear and discontent to Moses. Essentially, they expressed three things:

- 1.They would have been better off to die in Egypt than in the wilderness.
- 2.Their children and wives would become plunder if they invade Canaan.
- 3.They would be better off to return to Egypt.

Moses pled with the people but to no avail. God then expressed His anger and threatened to dispossess the people; but Moses argued against that and God honored Moses' request. God pardoned the people but swore that the generation that refused to enter the land would never enter the land but die in the wilderness.

Therefore, the individual adults at Kadesh-Barnea were redeemed people and saved individuals. Even though they exhibited temporary unbelief and were not permitted to enter the land, each man as an individual had smeared the blood of the lamb on his doorpost, been delivered at the Red Sea, been separated to God at Sinai, and had been brought into covenantal relationship with God. The individual adult at Kadesh-Barnea never lost his inheritance or right or ownership to the land. What he lost was the right to enjoy the land and the right to rest in it.

Salvation always comes first and then is followed by obedience. Yet, what is the outcome when a redeemed person is disobedient. Is he judged an apostate and destroyed? No. Throughout the Bible disobedience to God by God's redeemed people brought discipline. Obedience brought blessing but disobedience brought discipline or chastening.

Therefore it can be seen that Israel's disobedience at Kadesh-Barnea was not a sign of apostasy. They were both as a nation and as individuals, a redeemed people, saved and separated unto God. Their disobedience brought discipline and a loss of blessing, not condemnation and loss of eternal life.

Dunham points out:

The second warning of the book is the longest. It begins with an Old Testament quote in 3:7 and does not end until 4:11. Several things may be noted about this warning. It is not so easy to identify the objects of the warning as in the previous one. It is not so easy even to generalize about what the punishment might be. It places a more specific emphasis on historical perspective than the first warning.

With this in view, all the exhortations of this passage relate to the believer whose danger is not so much a faulty salvation experience but is rather a faulty apprehension of all that is involved in his salvation, especially in the present progress and future culmination of it.

Thomas points out:

We can see how the danger is to be met in the seven appeals that are made:

- 1.Consider (3:1)
- 2.Hear His voice (3:7)
- 3.Harden not your hearts (3:8)
- 4.Take heed (3:12)
- 5.Exhort (3:13)
- 6.Hold fast (3:14)
- 7.Fear (4:1)

It is interesting that none of these strong appeals refers to repenting and believing the gospel.

The writer's command in verses 8 to 11 is:

"Never let yourself get into the kind of spiritual hardness which issued in the 40 years of wandering for your forefathers. For that resulted in the anger and judgment of God upon them and will do likewise for you."

It would be good for us at this point to turn to Psalm 78, which summarizes Israel's history, that is referred to in this particular passage. I am reading from Psalm 78, beginning at verse 14:

He guided them with the cloud by day
and with light from the fire all night.
He split the rocks in the desert
and gave them water as abundant as the seas;
he brought streams out of a rocky crag
and made water flow down like rivers.
But they continued to sin against him,
rebellious in the desert against the Most High.
They willfully put God to the test
by demanding the food they craved.
They spoke against God, saying,
"Can God spread a table in the desert?
When he struck the rock, water gushed out,
and streams flowed abundantly.
But can he also give us food?
Can he supply meat for his people?"
When the Lord heard them, he was very angry;
his fire broke out against Jacob,
and his wrath rose against Israel,
for they did not believe in God
or trust in his deliverance.
Yet he gave a command to the skies above
and opened the doors of the heavens;
he rained down manna for the people to eat,
he gave them the grain of heaven.
Men ate the bread of angels;
he sent them all the food they could eat.
He let loose the east wind from the heavens
and led forth the south wind by his power.
He rained meat down on them like dust,
flying birds like sand on the seashore.
He made them come down inside their camp,
all around their tents.
They ate till they had more than enough,
for he had given them what they craved.
But before they turned from the food they craved,
even while it was still in their mouths,
God's anger rose against them;
he put to death the sturdiest among them,
cutting down the young men of Israel.
In spite of all this, they kept on sinning;
in spite of his wonders, they did not believe.
So he ended their days in futility

and their years in terror.

Dunham points out:

This is truly a remarkable example of the faithfulness of God and the faithlessness of His people. After all they did to rebel and disobey, still He did not stir up all His wrath against them, for they were His people. A further example of the work of God during the wilderness sojourn was the fact that their clothes did not wear out, as Moses reminded them in Deuteronomy 29:5. God provided clothes, food, guidance, and best of all, fellowship with himself during those days. But the effect upon the people was very small. Every reader of the epistle to the Hebrews who was familiar with the Old Testament would think of these and other explanations of the treatment God gave His people in the wilderness and how they responded in such a pagan, childish manner to His love and provision.

William R. Newell points out:

Today, mark its repetition five times over; verses 7, 13, 15, and twice in chapter 4:7. Speak it over and then write it. Today, today, today, today, today. And let the conscience and heart feel its full impact. How infinitely solemn it is. As Paul says to the Corinthians, "We entreat also that you receive not the grace of God in vain, for He saith, 'At an acceptable time I harkened unto thee and in the day of salvation did I sustain thee.'" Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. It is the Holy Spirit that says, Today. Our Lord wept over Jerusalem, saying, "Oh that thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace; but now are they hid from thine eyes because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.

Andrew Murray says:

To understand the words of the Holy Spirit, I must have yielded myself to be led by the Spirit. I must be living in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit cannot possibly lead us into the power and the blessing of God's word unless, with our whole heart, we harken to the voice. The Holy Spirit can teach in no way but in a heart that is given up to harken and to obey. There is nothing so hardening as delay. When God speaks to us, He asks for a tender heart open to the whispers of His voice of love. The believer who answers to the 'today' of the Holy Spirit with the tomorrow of some more convenient season, knows not how he is hardening his heart. The delay, instead of making the surrender and obedience and faith easy, makes it more difficult. It closes the heart for today against the Comforter and cuts off all hope and power of growth.

When God spoke to Israel, the first thing He asked of them was a heart that did not harden itself, but that in meekness, in gentleness, in tenderness, in docility turned itself to listen to His voice. How much more may He claim this now that He speaks to us in His Son. As the soil must be broken up by the plow and softened by the rain, so a broken, tender spirit is the first requisite for receiving blessing from God's word or being in truth made partakers of God's grace. As we read in Isaiah, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and trembleth at my word." When this disposition exists and the thirsty heart truly waits for divine teaching, and the circumcised ear opens to receive it, God's voice will bring real life and blessing and be the power of living fellowship with himself. Where it is wanting, the word remains unfruitful and we go backward, however much head and mouth be filled with Bible truth.

It is not difficult to say what it is that hardens the hearts. The seed sown by the wayside could not enter the soil because it had been trodden down by the passersby. When the world with its business and its interests has at all times a free passage, the heart loses its tenderness. When we trust too much to the intellect and religion and very great care is not taken to take each word as from God into the heart, into its life and love, the heart gets closed to the living voice of God. The mind is satisfied with beautiful thoughts and pleasant feelings but the heart does not hear God. When we are secretly content with our religion, our sound doctrine and Christian life, unconsciously but surely, the heart gets hardened. When our life does not seek to keep pace with our knowledge and we have more pleasure in hearing and knowing than obeying and doing, we utterly lose the meekness to which the promise is given; and amidst all the pleasing forms of godliness, the heart is too hard to discern the voice of the Spirit.

F. B. Meyer points out:

We should see not only to our own heart (Proverbs 4 - "Keep the heart, for out of it are the issues of life") but to the heart of our brethren, and exhort one another daily, watching over each other and seeking to revive drooping piety and to reanimate fainting hope. Let us take heed to these things today. Now is God's time. The Holy Ghost says today. Every day of delay is dangerous because the hardening process becomes more habitual. Today restore what you have taken wrongfully. Adjust a wrong. Promote a right. Today renounce some evil habit, some unhallowed pastime, some unlawful friendship. Today, reach out after some further realization of the fair ideal which beckons you. Today, leave the wilderness forever and enter by faith the land of promise.

Mark 3:5

And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Ephesians 4:18, 19

Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Lightfoot points out:

The epistle now moves from argument to exhortation. The author has established the absolute supremacy of Jesus over Moses, yet Moses was a great leader. And this very fact causes the author to ponder the possibility of failure under outstanding leadership. His inference is that Christians too, like the Israelites in the wilderness, can fall short of their promised inheritance.

Delitzsch points out in his commentary on Hebrews:

Every word of Scripture is as such a word of the Holy Ghost; for Scripture in all its parts is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). It is the Holy Ghost, surveying at once all times, who forms the word applicable to the present, and at the same time meeting the exigencies of the future.
p. 168

M. R. DeHaan points out:

In illustrating the danger of stopping short of God's best, the author of Hebrews now introduces the history of the children of Israel. This would be familiar ground for these Hebrew Christians who were fully acquainted with their nation's history, as recorded in the Old Testament. So they are pointed to the experience of the nation, as a warning against halting short of the abundant life.
p. 57

Witness well the case of Israel. They had been enslaved in Egypt under the cruel whip of their taskmasters. By sovereign grace God had delivered them by blood and by power. He had saved them from their miserable bondage and slavery. They were under the blood, a redeemed people out of Egypt, never to return again. But that was only the beginning of the journey--Canaan was the goal. God not only wanted them out of Egypt, but in the land of Canaan. Between these lay a wilderness journey which seemed indeed impassable. But God made provision for their safe arrival in Canaan if they would obey Him and trust Him. He put the Red Sea between them and Egypt so they could not go back. He provided a pillar of cloud and of fire to inerrantly guide them. He gave them manna from heaven and water from the rock. Their clothes never became threadbare and their shoes did not wear out. What an adequate provision was theirs with every need supplied!
pp. 58-59

Roy Hession in his book From Shadow to Substance says:

As we have seen, Paul is addressing a people who in their Christian lives had begun but had not gone on. In chapters 3 and 4 of this epistle he illustrates the position they were in by likening it to the position of their fathers when they had been brought out of the bondage of Egypt, but had failed to enter into the land of Canaan which God had promised them. They were somewhere in between--in the desert of Sinai and that for no less than forty years. Theirs was a pathetic case of stopping short of the good thing God had purposed. Paul sees that as exactly the position of his readers and he writes to urge them to go on from living in the spiritual (or unspiritual) counterpart of the wilderness to living in the spiritual counterpart of Canaan and to give them every encouragement to do so.
p. 27

This is why there is such a heavy emphasis in this passage on the word "today." It matters not that I came out of Egypt and entered into Canaan in the past. It is what is happening today that matters. Today, if I hear his voice, I am not to harden my heart and be like the children of Israel in the wilderness. Today, I need my brother to exhort and challenge me, lest I be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Today, after so long a time, He calls me again to return.

Wiersbe says:

The writer uses the failure of Israel as a warning against a hard heart. How does a believer's heart become hard? By refusing His words, despising His works, and being ignorant of His ways. Sin is deceitful. You think you are getting away with it, but all the while it is hardening your heart and robbing you of blessing.
pp. 814-15

Hewitt says:

Each day God may speak, and each day He may be resisted; but He may also be accepted. Yet the constant resistance of the voice and the refusal of grace may produce a habit of resistance which cannot be broken, and the judicial sentence of God, which at last endorses this, is applied to that hardened heart.
p. 81

Draper says:

When the eternal God stoops down to speak to man, if we throw away that moment, we may harden our hearts: "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (3:7, 8). If we turn away from God, our hearts will become calloused, hardened.

The word "harden" refers to something that dries up and becomes parched, cracked, hardened. When a tree is very small, we can bend branches and the trunk of the tree to the ground. It is pliable. It can be pushed from one side to the other. But when it has grown and becomes a strong, great tree, we cannot bend it. It is no longer pliable. It is set. That is what may happen to our hearts. Our hearts may be hardened. There are some ways that we harden our hearts. The writer of Hebrews identifies some for us.
p. 81

Hughes says:

Two key words in these verses help us understand what it means to harden one's heart. They are the words "rebellion" and "testing" in verse 8. The renderings here come from the Greek Septuagint, but the original Hebrew behind the word "rebellion" is meribah, and behind "testing" is massah. Check Psalm 95:7, 8, as it is rendered in your Old Testament, and you will read: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert."

These words point us directly to Exodus 17, where early in their wilderness experience Israel was camped at Rephidim by Mount Sinai and ran out of water and began to quarrel with Moses. There, "Moses replied, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?' (v. 2). And then, following God's direction, he struck the rock, and it gave water to Israel. The account concludes with this postscript: "And he called the place Massah [i.e., testing] and Meribah [i.e., quarreling] because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'"
p. 99

Life's greatest moment is before us, when we hear the voice of God speaking to us. If we will hear it, we can enter into the blessing of God in our life. If not, we cannot. It boils down to this:

WE HAVE A CHOICE.

We are confronted by the voice of God. We hear God's voice. Our soul stirs as God is dealing with us. We have only one choice:

whether we will say, like PHARAOH:

"Who is the Lord that I should listen to Him?"

or we will say like the PRODIGAL SON:

"I will arise and go to my father."

We must make our own choice when we hear God's message.

TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS.

ABRAHAM was called of God in Genesis 12.

NOAH was called of God in Genesis 6 to build the ark.

ISAIAH in Isaiah 6 heard the Lord calling him.

SAUL OF TARSUS on the road to Damascus received the call of God for his life.

We can hear the Holy Spirit calling us, or as PETER MARSHALL once described it:

"Tapping us on the shoulder."

Proverbs 8:4

"To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to the sons of men."

Isaiah 1:2, 3

"Listen, O heavens! and hear, O earth, for the Lord speaks. Sons I have reared and brought up but they have revolted against me. An ox knows its owner and a donkey its master's manger, but Israel does not know. My people do not understand."

Pink points out:

Let everyone see to it that he rightly avail himself of today, of the present time. For this alone is ours, since the past is already gone and the future is still uncertain. Besides, if the present is properly employed, it brings with it a blessing for the future.

v. 9 Where your fathers tried me by testing me, and saw my works for forty years.

How is it that the Israelites manifested their rebellion toward God in the day of trial in the wilderness? It is noted in 2 WAYS in verse 9:

1. "YOUR FATHERS TRIED ME BY TESTING ME"
2. They "SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS."

Hughes says:

The point the writer of Hebrews wants his readers to see is that it is possible to have a remarkable spiritual "exodus" and yet fall by the way when trouble comes. This was the Holy Spirit's message to the beleaguered little church from Psalm 95, and it is his message to us.

If we have been Christians for any length of time, we have seen this lived out. During my years as a youth pastor, I had a spectacular "convert" in my group--a classic hippie who turned overnight into a classic "Jesus person." He was intelligent, winsome, handsome and spiritual. Just a few weeks after this "exodus," he would stand regularly to give testimony, entrancing all who heard. He even reproached the lukewarm. I was so proud!

But it all came down in one unforgettable week when a relationship he was pursuing fell through and he hurt himself in a church softball game. The result? Rejection of Christ--and a lawsuit against the church!

Jesus said of such, "What was sown on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away" (Matthew 13:20, 21).

p. 102

v.10 Therefore, I was angry with this generation, and I said,
 'They are always being led astray in their heart; and they did not know my
 ways';

This is the 3RD "THEREFORE" in the passage:

1. Back in verse 1
2. and verse 7
3. and now here in verse 10.

Here we get the Lord's RESPONSE to the irresponsible behavior of the Israelites.

The Lord says 2 THINGS:

1. "THEY ARE ALWAYS BEING LED ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART"
2. "THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS"

Dunham points out:

A very important fact is here to be noted. They were not accused of failure to know God but of failure to know His ways. The writer's main point is evident. That generation was both deceived and ignorant of the ways of God. It seems almost inconceivable that they could have seen all that He did for them, yet not understand His ways. Perhaps their key error was in their failure to see that His ways are for His glory and not for the convenience or the whim of the believer. They were too prone to tell God what they wanted Him to do for them and ignorant of what He wanted them to do for Him. The result of the believer's rebellion is found in verse 11. If one understands this verse, he is not likely to go astray in the rest of the section. And conversely, an error here will lead to a faulty view of the section.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

God's reaction was one of anger. The word could mean "to loath." It is a word to refer to an intense displeasure or wrath.

"THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS."

In other words, they had a LACK OF EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE of the Father's way of doing things.

Wiersbe says:

The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart. The people of Israel (except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) erred in their hearts (Heb. 3:10), which means that their hearts wandered from God and His Word. They also had evil hearts of unbelief (v. 12); they did not believe that God would give them victory in Canaan. They had seen God perform great signs in Egypt. Yet they doubted He was adequate for the challenge of Canaan.

p. 41

Owen says:

When God says He "was grieved," He means that He was burdened, vexed, displeased beyond what forbearance could extend unto. This includes the judgment of God concerning the greatness of their sin with all its aggravations, and His determinate purpose to punish them. Men live, speak and act as if they thought God very little concerned in what they do, especially in their sins; that either He takes no notice of them, or if He do[es], that He is not much concerned in them; or that He should be grieved at His heart--that is, have such a deep sense of man's sinful provocations--they have no mind to think or believe.

p. 51

MacArthur says:

The word **angry** does not mean simply unhappy or disappointed. It means vexed, wrought up, incensed. God was extremely angry with Israel's sin. The people kept it up, kept it up, and kept it up. The Septuagint of this passage could be rendered, "God loathed them." He rejected and repudiated them.

Why? Because they always **went astray in their heart; and they did not know My ways.**

p. 90

Newell points out:

To try God by proving Him is to say deep in the heart, I am going to do such and such things which He has forbidden and threatened against, and see whether anything will overtake me. Thus a lad might say, Father has forbidden the very thing that I want to do and says that he will whip me if I disobey. But I do not believe he will punish me. I will do what he forbids me and see if he will. So he disobeys and such disobedience is trying by proving.

They erred in their hearts, not in their heads. You remember Psalm 103:

He made known His ways unto Moses, His doings under the children of Israel.

Why did he make known His ways to Moses? Hark unto Moses' prayer, pleading alone with God at Sinai after the calf worship. Now therefore I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me thy ways, that I may know thee. Consequently, God made known his ways unto Moses. But unto the children of Israel He made known only his doings. Now it is of our personal friends that we say, "I know his or her ways." A person's ways arise from and express his personality. It is one's delight to be acquainted with the ways of our friends, of those we love, to understand their feelings toward us; and to be able, in general, to predict what their opinions, actions or reactions will be. But how many among Israel cried to God when Moses did to know His ways, to be acquainted with Him.

Delitzsch points out:

God had not immediately punished the disobedience of His people with forfeiture of all the promises. He had remonstrated with them. But His call to repentance had been unavailing: they had remained without knowledge; they had refused to recognize the purpose of His dealings with them.

p. 172

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Psalm 119:65-68

Thou hast dealt well with thy servant,
 O Lord, according to thy word.
 Teach me good discernment and knowledge,
 for I believe in thy commandments.
 Before I was afflicted I went astray.
 But now I keep thy word.
 Thou art good and doest good.
 Teach me thy statutes.

(Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging by Brennan Manning)

An old anecdote is told about a farm boy whose one skill was finding lost donkeys. When asked how he did this, he answered, "I just figured out where I would go if I was a jackass, and there it was."
 p. 169

(Broken In The Right Place by Alan E. Nelson)

ATTITUDE CHECKS FOR BROKENNESS

1. Am I willing to let go of my dreams and ambitions if such is God's will?
 2. Am I defensive when accused, or criticized, or misunderstood?
 3. Am I coveting what others have instead of waiting for heaven's rewards?
 4. Am I forgiving when offended, with or without an apology?
 5. Am I complaining or arguing out of unsundered rights?
 6. Am I thinking of others first out of love?
 7. Am I proudly appearing that I am always right or know all the answers?
 8. Am I practicing the spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, solitude, simplicity, etc.)?
 9. Am I being silent regarding self-promotion and letting God do my public relations?
 10. Am I daily saying, "God whatever it takes, I'm willing to submit to your leadership"?
 11. Am I expressing joy in the difficulties which serve to refine me?
 12. Am I taking risks out of obedience to Christ instead of giving in to fear, pride, or denial?
- p. 123

v.11 As I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest."

Seminary Lecture Notes:

God may manifest wrath against His people for continued disobedience. "Rest" means here a permanent cessation of activity. It refers to a fulfillment of the promises which had been given to them.

Griffith Thomas says:

The thought of rest here and throughout this section is not that of relief from fatigue, but cessation from work which has been well done.

p. 44

DeHaan raises the question:

What rest is meant here by the Lord? Was it the "rest" of redemption? It could not be that, for they already had received that "rest" by being delivered from the brick kilns of Egypt. It was the "rest" of the land of Canaan, the land of victory and the abundant life of milk and honey, corn and wine. God did not send them back into Egypt when they sinned to "unredeem" them again. They were still redeemed from Egypt, but fell short of Canaan and died in the wilderness. Dying in the wilderness! What a tragic fate for a redeemed people!

p. 59

F. B. Meyer raises the question:

How may we practically realize and enjoy the rest of God?

--(1) We must will the will of God. So long as the will of God, whether in the Bible or in providence is going in one direction and our will in another, rest is impossible. Can there be rest in an earthly household when the children are ever chafing against the regulations and control of their parents? How much less can we be at rest if we harbor an incessant spirit of insubordination and questioning, contradicting and resisting the will of God? That will must be done on earth as it is in heaven. None can stay his hand, or say, What doest Thou? It will be done with us, or in spite of us. If we resist it, the yoke against which we rebel will only rub a sore place on our skin; but we must still carry it. How much wiser, then, meekly to yield to it, and submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God, saying, "Not my will, but Thine be done!" The man who has learned the secret of Christ, in saying a perpetual "Yes" to the will of God; whose life is a strain of rich music to the theme, "Even so, Father"; whose will follows the current of the will of God, as the smoke from our chimneys permits itself to be wafted by the winds of autumn--that man will find rest unto his soul.
p. 21

Roy Hession in From Shadow to Substance says:

My Saviour, Thou hast promised rest,
Oh, give it then to me,
The rest of ceasing from myself,
To find my all in Thee.

p. 36

E. R. Clendenen, in an unpublished master's thesis entitled Yahweh's Rest in Psalm 95, concluded that:

The "rest" of Psalm 95 is the rest found by a weary nation through the grace of God in the land He had promised them.

Therefore, the conclusion of this study is that Hebrews 3 is: a warning to believers, exhorting them to be obedient and demonstrating to them that the consequences of disobedience is discipline and loss of blessing.

J. Vernon McGee points out:

It was not necessary for God to take an oath but He did. God said that because of unbelief, that generation of Israelites would not enter into the land of promise. And my friend, until you not only accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, but walk with Him by faith, committing your life to Him, you are not going to know anything about the joys of Canaan. Unfortunately, we have a great many wilderness Christians in our churches. The wilderness is a place of death. It is a place of unrest. It is a place of aimlessness and it is a place of dissatisfaction. To those Israelites out there in the wilderness, God said, You are not going to know what rest is. And there are many believers today who just don't know what rest really means. They have never entered into it because they must enter by faith.

The "REST" is the added blessing from God one receives as a believer when he lives a life in obedience to God.

F. B. Meyer points out:

The wilderness experience is emblematic, amongst other things, of unrest, aimlessness and unsatisfied longings.

Unrest = the tents were constantly being struck, to be erected in much the same spot, theirs a perpetual weariness and they were not suffered to enter into God's rest.

Aimlessness = they wandered in the wilderness in a desert way. They found no city of habitation.

Unsatisfied longings = hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted in them.

But how typical of the lives of many among ourselves. Life is passing away so swiftly from us, but how unideal, how few Christians seem to have learned the secret of the inner rest. How many are the victims of murmuring and discontent or bitten by the serpents of jealousy and passion, of hatred and ill will. The almost universal experience tells of broken vows and blighted hopes, of purposeless wanderings, of a monotony of failure, always striking and pitching the camp, always surrounded by the same monotonous horizon--sand, with here and there a palm tree, always fed on the same food 'til the soul loathes it. Life passes away amid fret and chaffing, disappointment and weariness of existence, til we say with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Deuteronomy 28:65, 66

Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.

God's oath declares His unalterable purpose. Their hardness of heart caused Him righteously to debar them from entering into His rest, notwithstanding His having called them out of Egypt for that very purpose.

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions
by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

Order my footsteps by Thy Word,
And make my heart sincere;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
But keep my conscience clear.

--Unknown

p. 238

(Active Spiritually by Charles R. Swindoll)

Petrarch was so right when he wrote:

Five great enemies to peace inhabit within us: avarice, ambition, envy, anger, and pride. If those enemies were to be banished, we should infallibly enjoy perpetual peace.

p. 134

(Acts of Love: The Power of Encouragement by David Jeremiah)

I have always been a fan of Alfred Hitchcock. In one of his classic TV episodes, he dramatized the story of a wicked woman who had been guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison. In an early courtroom scene, the angry woman screamed at the judge and vowed that, no matter where she was imprisoned, she would escape and come back to make him sorry that he had sentenced her.

They took her away, and she took that infamous bus ride to prison. En route, she noticed something which was to become part of her escape plan. She saw an old man, a prison inmate, covering up a grave outside the prison walls. She soon realized the only way she could escape was to get a key to the prison's gate. And the only inmate who had a key was the old man who assisted in the burial of the dead prisoners. Actually, he not only buried them, but he also built the caskets in which they were buried. His job included rolling the casket on an old grave cart outside the walls, lowering it into the hole, and covering it up with dirt.

This old man was going blind and needed cataract surgery. The woman found out about this and went to him. She told him that he should help her escape because, outside the walls, she had enough money to pay all of his medical expenses. He could have his eyes completely fixed.

At first, he said, "No, ma'am. I can't do that."

"Oh, yes, you can," she said. "Outside of this place, I have all the money you need to pay for your cataract surgery, and if you help me get out of here, I will give you that money. If you ever hope to have an operation, you will help me escape."

Finally, he reluctantly gave in. Here was the plan. The next time she heard the toll of the bell which signaled the death of an inmate, she would slip down to his workroom where he made his caskets. She was to locate the casket in which the old man had placed the corpse, and then secretly slide herself into that same casket and pull the top down tightly. Early the next morning, the old man would roll her along with the corpse in the casket, out to the place of burial. He would drop the casket into the hole, dump a little dirt on it, and the next day he would come back, uncover the grave, release the lid on the casket, and she would be free.

A perfect plan . . . almost.

Late one night she heard the toll of the bell. Someone had died. This was her moment! She secretly slid off her cot, and made her way down the hallway. Looking into the dimly lit room she saw the casket, and without hesitation she lifted the lid and in the darkness slipped into the box. After squeezing in beside the corpse, she pulled the lid down tightly. Within a matter of hours, she could feel the wheels rolling as they were making their way to the grave site. She smiled as the casket was placed in the hole. She began to hear the clumps of dirt as they hit the top of the casket. Before long, she was sealed beneath the earth, still smiling. She had done it! Silence followed. She could barely contain her excitement. Time began to drag. The next day came and passed into the night and the old man didn't show up. Now she began to worry. In fact, she broke into a cold sweat. Where was he? What could possibly have gone wrong? Why hadn't he shown up?

In a moment of panic, she lit a match and glanced at the corpse next to her, and . . . it was the old man himself. Her only hope lay buried right beside her.

pp. 53-55

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: We are commanded to gaze upon Jesus Christ. He must be the center of our contemplation. Where we put Christ is the important thing. If I am not occupied with Christ, I am occupied with myself.

LESSON #2: Jesus Christ is an Apostle in that He was sent by the Father, and He is a High Priest in that He came to make a sacrifice of Himself.

LESSON #3: Faithfulness delights the heart of God when He sees it in His children.

LESSON #4: Moses is a servant in the house. Jesus is a Son who built the house.

LESSON #5: We demonstrate our commitment to Christ when in the midst of adversity we maintain our confidence and boast of our hope.

LESSON #6: Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

LESSON #7: Our hearts become hardened by the consistent refusal to respond to Him.

LESSON #8: God was angry with Israel because of their rebellion, their refusal to respond, and their lack of repentance.

LESSON #9: Two things made Him angry: "They are always being led astray in their heart"; and "They did not know my ways."

LESSON #10: God vowed that the consequences would be: "They shall not enter my rest."

(They Walked with God by James S. Bell, Jr.)

An old man got up in one of our meetings and said, "I have been forty-two years learning three things." I pricked up my ears at that; I thought that if I could find out in about three minutes what a man had taken forty-two years to learn, I should like to do it. The first thing he said he had learned was that he could do nothing toward his own salvation. "Well," said I to myself, "that is worth learning." The second thing he had found out was that God did not require him to do anything. Well, that was worth finding out too. And the third thing was that the Lord Jesus Christ had done it all, that salvation was finished, and that all he had to do was to take it.

D. L. Moody

02/02

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

This hymn text by Frances Havergal, often called "England's Consecration Poet," reflects so well her personal lifestyle. Her brief life of 43 years was said to be completely dedicated to God and His service. The music was composed for this text by James Mountain, an English Baptist pastor, evangelist and musician. The hymn first appeared in its present form in the Hymns of Consecration and Faith, published in 1876. The song was titled "Perfect Peace."

These choice words have made this a favorite hymn of many of God's people through the years, especially when called upon to face difficult problems:

Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace, over all victorious in its bright increase; perfect, yet it floweth fuller ev'ry day; perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way.

Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand, never foe can follow, never traitor stand; not a surge of worry, not a shade of care, not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there.

Ev'ry joy or trial falleth from above, traced upon our dial by the Sun of Love; we may trust Him fully all for us to do--They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.

Refrain: Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest--finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest.

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