

RTS Women's Study: The Book of Hebrews

#7: Hebrews 3:7-19: A Warning Against Unbelief

Intro: Are You Good at Listening to Warnings?

I. God's Gracious Offer: Rest

A. Through Psalm 95, God reminds his people that he offers rest

- Heb 3:7-11 cites Psalm 95:7-11 and tells that God offered the Israelites "rest" when he brought them out of the land of Egypt
- Key point: God is kind, gracious, and good. He *wants* to bless his people

B. But, the Israelites rejected God's kindness and rebelled

- Psalm 95 refers to Israel's rebellion in the desert—a story the readers would've have known well
 - After God delivered Israel from Egypt, they grumbled and complained
 - God declared that generation would never enter the promised land
- Numbers 14 is about the pivotal moment
 - The spies return from the land saying it was flowing with milk and honey, but filled with giants. As a result, they were too afraid to enter it.
 - Numbers 14:28-30:
 - 'As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹ your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, ³⁰ not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

II. God's Serious Warning: Don't Harden Your Heart

A. What's a hard heart?

- It is an unbelieving heart
 - "unbelieving heart" (v.12)
 - "they were unable to enter because of unbelief" (v.19)
- It is a disobedient heart
 - "they always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways" (v.10)
 - "those who sinned" (v.17)
 - "those who were disobedient" (v.18)

- It's a heart that turns against God despite all the privileges and blessings
 - The Israelites "saw my works for forty years" (v.9)
 - They had all the evidence and all the good reasons to belief, and yet still turned away from God
 - **Key point: Some people who have every reason to believe don't believe; and some people who have every reason not to believe do. It shows that it is all in God's hands!
- B. What are the dangers of a hard heart?
 - It may be "leading you to fall away from the living God" (v.12). Remember, "falling away" doesn't mean a true believer can lose their salvation. But it does refer to someone who seems like a believer but proves to have a hard heart.
 - It provokes the wrath of God: "As I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest" (v.11)

III. Our Response to the Warning: What Can We Do to Keep from Falling Away?

- A. "Take care" (v.12)
 - Take the warnings seriously! Pay attention! Don't ignore the warning signs in your life
 - Example: Like a person with heart attack signals
 - Application point: What's the status of your heart today?
- B. "Exhort one another" (v.13)
 - We need perpetual reminders to keep running the race. Our hearts are forgetful and needful of prompting. And this best takes place in community.
 - "As long as it called Today" (v.13) reminds us that the task is urgent. We want to be careful not to drift past the point of no return.
 - Keep point: Don't walk through the Christian life alone.
- C. "Hold our confidence firm to the end" (v.14)
 - Perseverance is the great test of who is a true believer
 - Part of fighting apostasy is just taking the next step in the race; don't stop or give up.
 - This means when we run, we are looking forward—to Christ and the great promised rest he provides.

Discussion Groups

1. When's the last time you really analyzed the state of your heart? How's your heart doing today in terms of hardness and unbelief?
2. Do you ever find yourself appealing to your *privileges*—church member, Bible teacher, etc.—as a reason why you belong to God's people? How does this passage correct that tendency?
3. Why is it so important to fight apostasy in the midst of community? How's your level of involvement in Christian community today?