

HEBREWS 3

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Hebrews chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Again, I believe that the writer of this letter to the Hebrews was Paul. And he is writing to Jewish believers who were struggling with their faith, being drawn back into Judaism and the Law for salvation instead of being saved by Grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone!

And I believe that these Jewish believers were living in Jerusalem and thus, with the Temple still in existence, with the sacrifices continuing on, with all the pressure to come back to the Law, there was this battle and Paul is trying to counter that attack on them as he shows them that Jesus is superior to all, even the Law!

This is a huge task that Paul has taken on, showing these Hebrew believers that Jesus is superior to all, and the focus is all that the Jewish people held dear to them.

We saw that as we opened up this letter as Paul shares that Jesus is superior to the prophets who spoke for God, **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”** Hebrews 1:1-3.

From there he moves on to show that Jesus is superior to angels and he covers this in chapters 1 and 2 of Hebrews.

His point is this, **“having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”** Hebrews 1:4.

In fact, to drive home the point and not make any room for discussion on this, Paul shares what God the Father has to say about God the Son. Paul wrote, **“But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.’”** Hebrews 1:8-9.

God the Father calls the Son, God and thus, Jesus is eternal, He created all things, even the angels, and thus, He is superior to the angels!

And we will see Paul show them in future chapters of Hebrews, that Jesus is superior to Joshua, over the Levitical priesthood and over the principle of faith as he shows us examples of faith, endurance of faith and exhortation in the faith as he concludes his letter.

And now, as we move into Hebrews chapter 3 this evening, Paul is going to show them how Jesus is superior to Moses.

Now we might not think much about this, but Moses was a heavy hitter of the Jewish faith. Along with Abraham and Elisha, these three were powerful men of God. And for Moses and Elisha, Moses represented the Law and Elisha the prophets and to show that Jesus is superior to Moses was a very big deal.

Thus, his point is simple and straightforward. How can you go back to Judaism when what Christ offered was so much better than what Moses could offer?

Well, what did Jesus offer that was superior to Moses? Let me show you.

- Moses gave the Law to Israel; we might say the Word of God. Jesus was the Word of God made flesh!

- Now, in saying that, I think we can safely say that the Law came through Moses. But we see that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. That is what we are told in John 1:17.
- We also see that it was Moses who delivered Israel from their bondage in Egypt through the blood of the lamb. And as great as that was, it pales in comparison to what Jesus has done for us. Jesus was the Lamb of God who delivered the whole world from the bondage of sin and death through His own shed blood!
- We will see in Hebrews 3:5-6 that Moses was a faithful servant in God's house or family, but Jesus was the One who created the family and is the Son of God, the Owner of the house.
- And yes, Moses delivered the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt, but he could not bring them into the Promise Land, they did not enter that rest. But Jesus came and has given His people that rest as He brings us into the life of the Spirit, the Promise Land. And the idea here is that the Law can never give you rest from our works, we have to keep doing and doing and doing. But in grace, we can find that rest from our works because the work was completed by Jesus!

Let me share this with you to drive home this point about Moses and how important he was to the Jewish people. We are told,

Next to Abraham, Moses was undoubtedly the man most greatly revered by the Jewish people. To go back to the law meant to go back to Moses, and the recipients of this letter to the Hebrews were sorely tempted to do just that. It was important that the writer convince his readers that Jesus Christ is greater than Moses, for the entire system of Jewish religion came through Moses.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, NT*, p. 89

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Hebrews chapter 3, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as the Holy Spirit shows us Jesus and His superiority over everything and everyone, including Moses!

HEBREWS 3**VERSE 1**

As we will see as we read through this letter that Paul wrote to the Hebrews, we are going to see over and over again Paul using the word “**therefore**” as he is starting a new topic, as we saw as chapter 2 opened up.

Here Paul is saying, *“In light of all that Jesus is, what I just shared with you, that He is God, don’t go back but keep your eyes focused on Jesus!”*

You see, we were not holy people but by His atoning work on the cross of Calvary we became holy in Him, and not only holy, but holy brethren.

Paul said in Hebrews 2:11, **“For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”**

That is what Jesus has done for us!

And please understand that Paul is speaking to believers, Jewish believers who were struggling with their faith. That is why he called them *“holy brethren.”*

One writer put it like this as he wrote,

The twofold description of the readers makes it clear that they were converted people. “Holy brethren” could only be applied to people in the family of God, set apart by the grace of God. That the writer was referring to people in the church, the body of Christ, is clear from his use of the phrase “partakers of the heavenly calling.” No unconverted Jew or Gentile could ever claim that blessing!

Now we are also partakers of the heavenly calling or as Paul said in Hebrews 2:10, “**For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.**”

Again, that is what Jesus has done for us.

As Paul moves on, he tells them to “**consider,**” or KATANOEEO, (kat-an-o-eh’-o) in the Greek, which carries with it the idea to pay close attention, continually observe.

Barclay tells us of this word, “*It does not mean simply to look at or to notice a thing. Anyone can look at a thing or even notice it without really seeing it. The word means to fix the attention on something in such a way that its inner meaning, the lesson it is designed to teach, may be learned.*”

In other words, it is an earnest appeal to look, to learn, and to understand.

But what are we to focus on, what are we to pay close attention to?

Very simply, **JESUS**, keep focused on Him, which was important for these Jewish believers to hear because as they faced persecution, they were being drawn away from Christ and back into Judaism, back to Moses!

And let me say this. What was happening to these Jewish believers back then can still happen to believers today as they are drawn into all kinds of earthly religious trappings that don’t draw us closer to Jesus, but they end up pushing us away because we are not focused on the substance, which is Jesus!

In fact, that is the reason so many Christians are weak, defeated, worried because they have not considered Jesus in the situation. They are missing out on the rest that only Jesus can give to us because they have to work, and work and work to enter in and in that, there is no rest. But Jesus gives to us that rest because our salvation is based upon grace, an unmerited gift that He has given to us. We don't deserve it, we can't work to receive it, we receive it by faith!

Thus, put your mind upon Jesus, let it remain there so that you will understand who He is and what He wills for your life!

One writer summed it up like this. He wrote,

The reason so many Christians are weak and worried is that they do not keep considering Christ, and so His full strength and comfort and guidance are not theirs. The Holy Spirit continually says to every believer, "*Consider Jesus.*"

When life gets rough and problems seem to have no solution and everything goes bad and disappointment and depression become "*normal*" and temptations seem impossible to resist - put your gaze on Jesus and keep it there intently until He begins to unfold before your very eyes in all His glorious power.

Jesus said, "Learn from Me" (Matt. 11:29). He did not say, "Learn about Me" but "Learn from Me."

Do you really enjoy your Christian life?

Do you get up in the morning and say, "Lord, I just can't wait to see what You're going to do today?"

Do you go through the day and say, "Lord, Your fellowship and Your presence are thrilling?"

Do you enjoy Jesus Christ?

Do you sometimes want to stand up and shout?

You ought to enjoy Him like that. But many Christians do not enjoy Jesus. They appear to be miserable and unhappy, and they do not know anything about His joy. They may think the only thing the Lord does for us is to give an occasional rebuke. They see Him this way because they do not walk with Him day by day. They do not know Him richly and deeply and intimately.

They need to consider Jesus and learn from Him.

- John MacArthur

I believe that we all know that, we understand that but at times life is difficult and we lose sight of Jesus because we let other things get in the way. Get refocused and look to Jesus. Let those other things go and focus on Him so that you can receive His peace and comfort from whatever you are going through! You can enter His rest!

Also, as we see here, Paul mentions two offices that Jesus occupies.

First, He is “**the Apostle**” or ambassador for God.

The idea here is that He represents God to us, what the Father is like. Jesus said in John 14:9, “**. . . ‘He who has seen Me has seen the Father . . .’**”

Secondly Paul tells us that Jesus is our “**High Priest**” and the idea here is that Jesus represents us before the Father.

In Hebrews 7:25 we are told, “**Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**”

Also, in Romans 8:34 we are told, **“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”**

And then, after he speaks of Jesus being the Apostle and High Priest, he says **“... of our confession, Christ Jesus.”** What does that mean?

Keep in mind that the word **“confession”** means, *“to say the same thing.”*

When we confess our sin, we *“say the same”* about it that God does.

In regard to salvation, all Christians *“say the same thing”* about their need for salvation and God’s provision in Jesus.

In other words, ***IT IS ALL ABOUT JESUS!***

VERSE 2

Now we are going to see Paul contrast the Greater with the lesser, Jesus to Moses. And please understand that Paul is not putting down Moses. Not at all. Moses was faithful in service.

But what Paul is doing is showing them and us that Jesus is superior to Moses in His earthly ministry. Completely faithful, where Moses misrepresented God at the waters of Meribah.

Let’s look at Moses for a minute. And yes, like I have said, Moses was faithful in the ministry God gave Him as Numbers 12:7-8 tells us, **“Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?”**

And please understand that when Paul speaks of “**house**” or OIKOS, (oy’-kos) in the Greek, he is not referring to a building or the Tabernacle but to people, he is speaking of the children of Israel, the family of God.

Now we move to the greater, to Jesus. And as we know, Christ was also faithful in His house, which is the church. In fact, He was completely faithful, He did not fall short at all!

Ephesians 2:19 tells us, “**Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.**”

Also, in I Peter 2:4-5 we are told, “**Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 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.**”

Thus, Jesus was faithful to the Father, He completed the work He was sent to do, as John 17:4 tells us, “**I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.**”

Now, as we see the faithfulness of Jesus in His earthly ministry, what does that tell you?

What it tells me is that since Jesus has been faithful, He will always be faithful and thus, we can trust in His promises to us. That is such an encouragement and a blessing to me and I hope to you as well!

So both Moses and Jesus were faithful in the work they were given to do, but Jesus was perfect in His faithfulness while Moses was not, although, because of faith, God saw Him as He was going to be, not as He was!

He does the same with each of us!

This was an introduction and now Paul is going to show us how Jesus is superior to Moses, he will make it perfectly clear to them and to us.

VERSES 3-4

Paul's point is this. Moses was part of the house, he was a child of Israel, but Jesus was the builder of the house and thus He receives the greater glory, the greater honor.

This should remind us of what Paul said in Hebrews 1:10, "**. . . 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.'**"

And in Hebrews 2:10 we are told, "**For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things . . .**"

Moses did not create the house or the family, Jesus did!

We see this in Colossians 1:15-18 where Paul tells us that Jesus created all things and He not only created them, but He sustains them.

He said, "**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**"

Again, Moses was faithful in the work that God had called him to do, but Jesus was the One who created the family and is the Son of God, He is the Owner of the house!

Think of it like this. Moses was only a member of the household that Jesus built, and we are only members of the church that Jesus built and thus, elevating anyone besides God to a place of worship is an abomination before the Lord.

According to Morris, the ancient Rabbis considered Moses to be the greatest man ever, greater than the angels. The writer to the Hebrews does nothing to criticize Moses, but he looks at Moses in his proper relation to Jesus.

So, for the Jew to hold onto Moses and worship him is foolish, he is part of the house, not the creator of the house. The creator of the house is Jesus, and thus, Jesus is superior to Moses!

VERSES 5-6

Look closely here at Hebrews 3:5 once again. Paul is telling us that Moses was a faithful servant and that his ministry was a testimony of those things that would come later on, things that would be spoken afterward.

What things? What God gave Moses to share was fulfilled or brought to completion through the ministry of Jesus.

What did God give to Moses to share with us?

God gave to Moses the Law!

And if you remember, the Law was needed to show man his sin. To show man how far short of perfection or righteousness that God would accept.

In Galatians 3:24-25 we are told, **“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”**

The Law was needed to make us aware of our sin. But now we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus and thus, **“we are no longer under a tutor”** or under the Law, we are under grace!

And, again, Paul is not putting down Moses, not at all. He had a role to play but now that is over because the Messiah, Jesus has come!

Listen to what Jesus has to say about Moses.

In John 5:46-47 we are told, **“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”**

In other words, Jesus is telling them that if they truly believed Moses, like they claimed to believe, like they were saying, then they would believe what Jesus was saying because Moses was testifying of the Messiah, of Jesus!

Also, in Luke 24:27 we are told, **“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”**

In other words, Moses spoke about Jesus!

And lastly, in John 1:17 John tells us, **“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”**

I think that is very clear. Yes, the Law was needed, and it was given through Moses. But the Law could never save you, it was never meant to save you. It was there to bring us to the Messiah and when we come to Jesus, we don't need the Law any longer, it has done its job!

And make no mistake about it, Moses was a servant, but Jesus is a Son and in John 8:35 we are told, **“And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.”**

Yes, Moses was very faithful, in fact, in Exodus chapters 35 through 40 there are some 22 references to the faithfulness of Moses but as faithful as this servant was, he was never called a son!

Now from Hebrews 3:6 and on through most of Hebrews chapter 4, it seems like Paul is saying that we need to do good works to be saved, or really to remain saved. And if we don't, we can lose our salvation.

Some tough words to think about.

And Paul does that with this call to these Jewish believers and to us to “**hold fast,**” don't give up, forge ahead, don't go backwards but keep your eyes upon Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

But, remember what Paul said in Philippians 1:6 said, “**being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**”

That is our hope that what God has started in us He will complete, He is not going to give up and thus, forge ahead in the race!

In High School I ran the distance races in the fall and the sprints in the spring.

Running short distances, like the 50-yard dash or 100-yard dash, you did not want to get distracted.

As you came up out of those starting blocks you did not look at your feet, but your head came up and you focused on the finish line.

You did not look to your left or to your right because that would slow you down.

For us as Christians, our eyes need to be focused on Jesus, no matter what we are going through, He will see us through it. In other words, “***Consider Jesus!***”

And as you look at the totality of the Scriptures, you will not find that teaching that you must hang in there and if you can do it, you will make it into heaven. If you can't, if you don't hold on, well, I guess you won't make it.

If that were true, and it is not, then no one would know if they were saved or not. But the Scriptures are clear on that, we can know if we are saved!

Now think about this for a minute and then I will show you how we can know we are saved, what the Scriptures say about this.

If we had to work our way in, "**hold fast**" then we can do really well, and we feel we are saved, and then, before we take our last breath, we blow it, we don't "**hold fast**" and I guess we are out!

But that is not what the Scriptures tell us. We are saved by the finished work of Jesus on the cross of Calvary and that work is finished, completed and there is nothing more we can add to it. If we did, it would no longer be grace, but works.

Now let me show you some Scriptures that clearly show we can know if we are saved.

Jesus said in John 5:24, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.**"

And in I John 5:13 John tells us, "**These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.**"

And think about this for a minute. First, we can't save ourselves, right? Of course that is right.

Thus, if we can't save ourselves, what makes us think we can sustain our salvation? We can't. We are saved by grace. We are sustained in this life by the grace of God. And one day we will be taken to glory by the grace of God and not by our good works!

If that is true, and I believe it is, then what is Paul saying here when he says, “**... whose house we are if we hold fast ...**” Hebrews 3:6.

What Paul is saying here is that by continuing on, by remaining in the faith, it is the proof that you are saved.

John tells us, “**They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.**” I John 2:19.

In other words, they didn't continue on in the faith because they never were really of the faith.

In fact, Jesus said in John 6:39, “**This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.**”

Do you think He meant it?

Of course He did!

Do you think He is able to hold onto us?

Of course He is, He is more than able!

There are those who profess the faith but are not possessors of the faith, of Jesus Christ and thus, it is an empty faith.

Paul said in II Corinthians 13:5, “**Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you are disqualified.**”

Make sure you are saved, and once you are, keep your eyes focused on Jesus!

One more Scripture to show you that it is *IMPOSSIBLE* for a true believer to walk away from Christ, to lose their salvation.

In Ephesians 1:13-14 we are told, **“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”**

For those of us who have come to Christ, we have been *SEALED* with the Holy Spirit and that sealing by the Holy Spirit is a *GUARANTEE* of our inheritance. We will be taken into glory. You see, it is a *GUARANTEE!*

And if you really think about it, if it was up to us to hold on, none of us would make it and like I have said, none of us could know if we were really saved or not.

These were powerful words to these Jewish believers regarding continuing on in the faith as evidence for their faith, especially with the heavy persecution they were facing.

VERSES 7-11

Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit has spoken forth these words, as Paul quotes out of Psalm 95:5-7, and the Holy Spirit was saying that, since Jesus is much greater than Moses, it should lead people to action! You need to do something with that truth and the idea here is that you need to come to Jesus, you need to come to saving faith!

And what Paul is doing here is he is going to use the example of Israel wandering in the wilderness as a picture of unbelief, not trusting God.

Now, is this showing a person who is not saved trying to encourage them to receive the Lord or is this showing a person who is saved but not trusting in the promises of God, not walking by faith but by sight?

I think both can apply here but I also think Paul's point is for those who are saved, as he is writing to Jewish believers.

As the children of Israel left Egypt, traveling from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea, which was on the boarder of the Promise Land, it was only an eleven-day journey, about 110 miles or so.

As they came to Kadesh Barnea Moses sent out 12 spies to enter the land, to check it out before they entered in with all the people. (Numbers 13-14)

And these spies spent forty days in the land and then returned to give their report.

Ten of the spies came back saying the land is great, it is flowing with milk and honey, the fruit is awesome and then came this one word, "**Nevertheless.**"

You see, in spite of all they saw that was good, they also saw that the cities were strong, the people were strong, and they were nothing compared to them. In fact, there were giants in the land!

Now, did they have the resources to enter the land?

Not at all! But that was not the point! And I will explain that in a minute

Then Joshua and Caleb, the other two spies spoke and basically said "***The Lord has given us this land to possess, what are we waiting for, let's enter in!***"

In other words, Joshua and Caleb were trusting in the promises of God and were willing to walk by faith. Yes, the enemy was strong. Yes, they lived in fortified cities. Yes, there were giants in the land. That was not the issue. The issue is that God had told them that this was the land He was giving to them and they just needed to trust Him, walk by faith and only Joshua and Caleb were willing to do that.

You see, the faithless spies caused the people to listen to them and they did not enter the land that God had instructed them to enter, they hardened their hearts to God.

Thus, God brought judgment upon them and all who were 20 years old and up died in the wilderness, they didn't enter into the Promise Land, they did not enter the rest the Lord had for them.

When you think about it, this was the longest death march in history, lasting some 40 years, until that generation who refused to walk by faith died out.

Only Joshua and Caleb entered in of that generation!

So what does that mean to us?

First of all, Egypt is a type of the world and before they left Egypt, they were saved by the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb upon the doorpost of their house.

We are saved as the blood of the Lamb of God; Jesus Christ is applied to our lives by faith.

So they move from the world into the wilderness but that is not where God desired them to be. He desired them to enter into the land of Canaan, the Promise Land.

The wilderness represents a life of walking by sight and not by faith, of trusting in what you can see and not what God has promised and folks, there is no rest in the wilderness!

Now were some of the children of Israel who died in the wilderness saved?

I believe so, I won't be dogmatic that all of them were saved, but some of them were, like Moses and Aaron who died in the wilderness, they didn't enter into the Promise Land.

Many Christians today live in the wilderness, sometimes they cross into the Promise Land, but they tend to go back and forth, mostly staying in the wilderness.

Yes, they are saved but they are not walking by faith, they have not appropriated that spiritual life that Christ has for them.

You see, the Promise Land is not speaking of death and going to heaven, that would make no sense since there are battles, wars in the Promise Land.

Thus, the Promise Land is speaking of a life of walking in the Spirit, not by sight but by faith!

Listen to what the Lord told Joshua as he prepared to lead the children of Israel into the Promise Land in Joshua 1:3, **“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.”**

Did you see that? The Lord told him, ***“Joshua, I have given you the land, but you must walk in the land to possess it!”***

God is telling us to do the same, to walk by faith and not by sight! It is as we walk in the Spirit we can rest in His promises!

And the key is not to harden our hearts to what God is telling us to do. Don't miss the opportunities that God has for you.

Now for those who don't know the Lord, today is the day of salvation. Don't pass it up. Don't harden your hearts any longer because you never know if the next time you reject the truth it will be your last time!

VERSE 12-15

Here is the warning, “**Beware,**” pay attention to what was just spoken. This is the application to the text. Don’t follow in the footsteps of the generation that perished in the wilderness because of unbelief!

Now is Paul speaking to believers here?

I know that some disagree with me but to me, he has to be speaking to believers because once again he calls them, “**brethren.**”

Unbelievers are not brethren!

So here is the tough question, “*Can believers depart from the living God?*”

Now you may be thinking, “*Pastor Joe, you said that they can’t, but it seems like they can according to this verse here in Hebrews 3:12.*”

Remember at Kadesh Barnea, they had no water, they did not believe God was going to provide for them. (Deuteronomy 32:51)

It was not that they did not believe there was a God.

It was not that they did not believe in the only true and living God.

They just did not believe that God was able to provide for them as I have said and that was their great sin, it was their unbelief!

Let me give you this example to show you what I mean that hardening your heart, unbelief does not mean you have lost your salvation.

Imagine having a child and they are going around the neighborhood complaining that you are not providing food for him to survive. He knows who you are, he believes in you, but he does not have faith that you will provide for him.

If your child did that would you remove him from the family, tell him that he was out, that he has lost his family?

Of course you would not.

You would discipline him and explain to him that you have always provided for him and you will continue to provide for him.

But what if your child is rebellious and hardened his heart towards you?

Then you would remove him from the family, right?

No, of course you would not do that.

Once again you would discipline him because you love him. You would not remove him from the family.

Now let me ask you this. Can a believer harden his heart to God?

Sure he can, I'm sure we have all done that before!

God tells us to do something and we make excuses why we can't when in reality, it is not that we can't, it is that we won't!

Let us not grieve the Holy Spirit or hinder what the Holy Spirit is saying to us, what He wants us to do. May we walk by faith in God, trusting Him, obeying Him as He leads us in this Promised Land, this life of the Spirit!

You see, God does not say, ***"That is it! I am tearing up the adoption papers; you are no longer in the family of God. You walked away and that is it!"***

Then what does God do? He disciplines us!

Now for those that are not saved, you can know everything about Jesus, you believe God is real, you believe that Jesus is the Savior but you are still not satisfied and folks, a person who lives in unbelief never has enough proof!

Look at all the miracles that the children of Israel saw and yet many refused to believe!

It is as Newell said, “Unbelief is not inability to understand, but unwillingness to trust . . . it is the will, not the intelligence, that is involved.”

How true that is for those who reject Jesus as their Lord and Savior, who know the truth, are professors of the truth but not possessors of the truth, they just refuse to apply it to their lives!

Listen to what Spurgeon said regarding this issue of unbelief. He tells us,

“The great sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is often spoken of very lightly and in a very trifling [insignificant] spirit, as though it were scarcely any sin at all; yet, according to my text, and, indeed, according to the whole tenor of the Scriptures, unbelief is the giving of God the lie, and what can be worse?”

He also said,

“Hearken, O unbeliever, you have said, ‘I cannot believe,’ but it would be more honest if you had said, ‘I will not believe.’ The mischief lies there. Your unbelief is your fault, not your misfortune. It is a disease, but it is also a crime: it is a terrible source of misery to you, but it is justly so, for it is an atrocious offense against the God of truth.”

And lastly, Spurgeon said,

“Did I not hear someone say, ‘Ah, sir, I have been trying to believe for years.’ Terrible words! They make the case still worse. Imagine that after I had made a statement, a man should declare that he did not believe me, in fact, he could not believe me though he would like to do so. I should feel aggrieved certainly; but it would make matters worse if he added, ‘In fact I have been for years trying to believe you, and I cannot do it.’ What does he mean by that? What can he mean but that I am so incorrigibly false, and such a confirmed liar, that though he would like to give me some credit, he really cannot do it? With all the effort he can make in my favour, he finds it quite beyond his power to believe me? Now, a man who says, ‘I have been trying to believe in God,’ in reality says just that with regard to the Most High.”

And like I have said, a believer can harden his heart to God! And I think that is what Paul is speaking of here or speaking to here, Jewish believers who were hardening their hearts to what God has said.

Now, what can we do to stand strong, to strengthen our faith? Exercise it! What does that mean?

First of all, Paul said in Romans 10:17, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**”

Reading, believing and applying the Word of God to our lives strengthen us in the faith.

Another way is to be in fellowship with other believers as they exhort you, keep you in line, help your faith to grow.

Tragically, one survey found that 78% of the general public and 70% of churchgoing people believe “*You can be a good Christian without attending church.*”

I disagree with that.

Paul said in Hebrews 10:24-25, “**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**”

It is as Proverbs 27:17 says, “**As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.**”

May we keep each other sharp in the Lord!

May we exhort each other, stir each other up in the faith and not harden our hearts through sins deceitfulness!

You see, we like to blame others for our hard hearts, but Paul tells us it is not because of others but because we have allowed sin to harden our hearts, we are being deceived!

Thus, stand strong in the faith, don't fall back, but keep moving forward!

Also, staying with the Lord makes the difference between possession and profession!

VERSES 16-19

Who entered into the land of Canaan, the Promise Land?

Only two men of that generation, Joshua and Caleb and the rest died in the wilderness, maybe some 600,000 people!

They never experienced that rest that the Lord had for them because that rest is linked to ***BELIEF!***

Now, was it a lack of obedience that caused them not to enter this rest? If that is true, as Hebrews 3:18 seems to indicate, then it seems like a works relationship that we have with God!

“And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?”

But, as we have seen, that is not what the Scriptures teach.

Look at Hebrews 3:19 again, **“So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”** You see, it was their unbelief that was then manifested in their life, in their actions, by their disobedience to the Lord! The unbelief came first and then the disobedience!

We see this in John chapter 6 very clearly. Jesus has just fed 5,000 men plus women and children, maybe some 15,000 to 20,000 people with just five barely crackers and two small pickled fish.

Afterwards Jesus gets into a boat and crosses the Sea of Galilee and the following day the people find Jesus and as they come to Him, He rebukes them.

Why?

Because He knew their hearts and that they were only interested in being fed physically, they wanted more free food and Jesus wanted their hearts, He wanted them to receive spiritual food.

And in John 6:28-29 we are told, **“Then they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”**

Do you see that? First you believe in God and then out of that belief you will serve Him, not the other way around. You don’t serve Him to believe in Him!

Make no mistake about it, the sin of Israel, their unbelief was serious as A. T. Pierson shows us. He said,

Their unbelief was a fourfold provocation:

It was an assault on God's truth and made Him a liar.

It was an assault upon His power, for it counted Him as weak and unable to bring them in.

It was an attack upon His immutability; for, although they did not say so, their course implied that He was a changeable God, and could not do the wonders He had once wrought.

It was also an attack upon His fatherly faithfulness, as though He would encourage an expectation, He had no intention of fulfilling.

May we not walk in unbelief, but trust in the Lord because His Word is truth, He can bring to pass that which He has promised us, that He would never go back on His Word and God will complete the work He has begun in us, may we not get in His way!

Paul tells us in Hebrews 11:6, **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

May we not only have the faith to believe God for our salvation, but faith in our daily lives, that we walk by faith and not by sight!

One writer summed it up like this. He wrote,

Again the author emphasized the word *today*, alerting Jewish believers that they, too, were in danger of developing the same hardness of heart and rebellious attitude toward God as their forefathers “who came out of Egypt” (vv. 15-16).

Though God was angry with those persistent sinners, He particularly showed them mercy for 40 years; but eventually they perished in the wilderness as punishment for their unbelief (v. 17). This was a direct fulfillment of God's Promise to unbelieving Israel. He preserved only Caleb and Joshua because they believed Canaan could be conquered (v. 18; Dt. 1:34-40).

Because of unbelief, these Israelites missed entering the Promised Land and the rest that God had prepared for them (Heb. 3:19). "Trials, troubles, temptation, testing, travail, turmoil, and tempest was their lot in place of the tranquility they might have enjoyed" had they believed and obeyed God.

The illustration, instruction, and invitation given in this chapter were not only for Jewish believers in the early church, but for us today. All who harden their hearts against God will forfeit His rest and suffer His discipline. This example sends a sobering message to all who profess faith in Christ. God will discipline believers who harden their hearts and rebel against Him.

- David M. Levey, Hebrews A Commentary, p. 40

Like I have said, many Christians live in the wilderness because they refuse to walk by faith, and they choose to walk by sight. They know what the Bible says, they believe what the Bible says, but they refuse to apply it to their lives.

That is tragic and again, my prayer is we would learn these lessons so that we would place our whole weight upon God and trust in Him, walking accordingly, taking those steps of faith.

As I close this evening let me leave you with this to think about.

If those who followed Moses were responsible to surrender, and to trust in following God's leader, how much more are we responsible to do the same with a Greater leader, with Jesus?

You see, Jesus is greater than Moses!