

the todays of our lives

hebrews 3.1-19

Hebrews chapter 3 this morning.

The author is getting into a section of the book talking about the rest of God and how our faithfulness as Christians is connected to the reception of that rest in our lives.

So, let's look at our text and see what we see.

Hebrews 3.1-19 - Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

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

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

“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”
For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

In Hebrews there are a few passages that people get all twitter-pated about, thinking that God is saying that you can lose your salvation.

A great and easy book to read on that subject is H.A. Ironside's *The Eternal Security Of The Believer*, which builds a strong, Biblical case of why it is impossible for a Christian to lose or forfeit his eternal salvation.

But this chapter is one where a person might read it and start to get nervous, thinking that God is holding heaven at arms length from you until you've proven that you've held firm enough to the end.

But, if we follow what the author is talking about and what he's *been* talking about, we can see contextually that he hasn't been talking about salvation. He's been talking to Christians about not drifting away from God and thereby missing out on God's power in their daily living. Here, he starts referring to the 'rest' of God and in chapter 4 he develops more about what this rest is, but as you look at this section it's clear that these warnings aren't referring to eternal salvation in heaven.

First of all, he's already made the assumption that he's talking to believers. And, to those believers, he's been talking about the future Kingdom where we, and his original readers, are going to rule and reign. He said in the last chapter to these readers that they no longer have to fear death since Jesus destroyed the power of death. He didn't say, "Jesus tasted death for you if you earn salvation up to the very last moment of your life."

Second, in our text we are given the illustration of Israel refusing to go into the promised land and, therefore, being punished by God. Now, that generation missed out on the inheritance God wanted for them, but they didn't cease being His people. He didn't say, "Ok, I'm going to go find another Abraham and bring out of him a new people." Instead He said, "If you don't *want* what I'm offering you, then you don't have to have it."

Third reason why this passage isn't talking about salvation is because here and in chapter 4 there is a strong focus on **today**. In chapter 4 the author is going to be talking about this 'rest' that's referenced and he's going to say:

Hebrews 4.7, 11 - ...again He designates a certain day, saying in David, 'TODAY'...Let us therefore to be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

So, this can't be talking about heaven or salvation because we cannot enter heaven today through our faithfulness. Which means the 'rest' that is being talked about here isn't an eternal security issue, it's about God's power and His ability to pour out His grace on your life.

What Hebrews 3 is talking about is us as Christians **partaking** of Christ today, so that we don't miss out on what Jesus Christ is offering to us as co-heirs of His inheritance.

The generation of Israel in the passage referenced, did miss out on the inheritance of Canaan. They didn't stop being the people of God, but they failed to receive the gift that God wanted to give them. They didn't trust God, then they wanted to get things from the Lord on their own terms, and God had to show them that's now how it works.

In Matthew chapter 11, Jesus said, “Come to Me and I will give you rest. I’ll take your burdens. You’ll find what you’re looking for.” He revealed that God is ready and waiting to pour out onto our lives the things we need plus much more.

Where we fail is saying, “God, You come to ME and give me that stuff.” But the Lord says, “No, if you want what I’m offering, you come on My terms. They’re gracious terms, but they’re My terms. You submit to Me, not the other way around.” God’s plan, God’s terms, God’s control.

Here in our text we’re reminded that Christianity is not an affiliation, it’s a household. God, who made all things, is the Creator and Ruler of that house and we are called to a place within it. And **today** I should live in that house and partake of my relationship with Christ so that I can receive the inheritance and gifts He’s wanting to give me.

First, in verse 7, we’re exhorted that today we must hear God. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, today, hear His voice. That means we’re clearing space in our hearts and our lives to hear from God. To not assume that the Lord isn’t going to say anything to us today. Much to the contrary, when we read the Bible we get the picture of a God who is constantly talking to His people so that He can direct them and teach them and comfort them.

One major way God speaks to us is through the Scriptures, which is why a fundamental idea in Christianity is the regular reading of God’s word. It’s not that we have to read a certain number of chapters each day otherwise God is mad at us. It’s that God says He wants to speak to us and one huge, obvious way He does it is through the Bible. God went to considerable lengths to get His word into our hands and we should be feeding on it regularly so that the Lord can deliver the direction and encouragement He wants to send our way.

In verses 8 and 9 we’re told that today we should soften our hearts and submit to God’s authority over our lives.

That was the trouble that the Israelites had in the wilderness. They weren’t soft-hearted and they weren’t submitted to God.

To me that example was a reminder that being a Christian doesn’t mean I’m automatically soft-hearted. God’s people aren’t immune from the problems of pride or bitterness or prejudice. Look at Israel. Look at the Pharisees. Look at even some of the early believers in Jerusalem who were pretty upset that the Gospel was being preached to Gentiles. Their hearts were hard.

God cares about the heart. And if our hearts are hard and rebellious, we’re going to find ourselves in trouble. And we’re certainly going to miss out on some of the gifts God wants to give us.

This doesn’t mean we all become touchy-feely in how we behave. What we’re talking about is a heart that is sensitive to sin. A heart that feels compassion for the lost and suffering people around us. A heart that is willing to change direction when it hears the Lord speak. And if we’re not experiencing those things; if we’re not really phased when we realize we’ve sinned, or if we allow prejudice to smother our compassion or if we’re too set in our ways to ever do something new or different for the Lord, that’s a sign that we’re hard-hearted and headed toward rebellion.

In verse 12, we're instructed that today we must believe. The just shall live by faith and that means that today I should believe that God wants to do a work in my life and through my life. I have to choose to walk in faith, believing that God is working something important and spiritual out through my actions and circumstances. And that also means that I believe there is more to life than comfort or wealth. Today, as I live, I should have the understanding that the God of the universe is maneuvering around me in order to bring Himself glory, fashion me into His image and impact the lives of the people around me. And, if I believe that, then my choices and habits and decisions should be filtered through heaven. Every decision I make isn't going to be the most fiscally beneficial. Every action I take isn't going to lead me to physical comfort. But, if I believe what God has said and if I'm living by faith, the Lord is going to be able to get me into a position where my life can accomplish His goals.

In verse 13 we're told that today we are to exhort each other. There's a real urgency in that verse. And the word the author uses is a really rich word. It is elsewhere translated as 'encourage' or 'to plead' or 'to pray' or 'to comfort' or 'call to one's side.' It's a great word.

Here we're commanded to minister to other believers. Come alongside them. Pray with them. Comfort them. Exhort them when they're headed toward sin. Encourage them in *their* service. Really, there's a lot of ministry we can do one to another in the house of God. And the reminder for us is that ministering to the people around us isn't something that's been left for other people to do, it's been left for us to do, and in this passage we see that we're to do it *today!*

For some reason it's easier to talk with our friends about cars than it is to talk with them about Jesus, but we've got to train ourselves out of that timidity.

Because we're invited to enter into God's rest *today*. And I want to partake of Christ and the inheritance He's offering.

Again, going back to the illustration of the Israelites in the wilderness, they held themselves back from the promised land. God didn't say, "You guys didn't earn this." He was trying to get them there and they turned their noses up at it.

And when I see that example, it makes me want to be sure I'm not holding myself back from what God is offering to me. That wisdom and peace and the testimonies He wants to build in my life and the gifts of the Spirit that He's prepared for me.

But, if I'm looking to some human philosophy for my daily life, then I'm going to miss out on God's wisdom.

If I am running away from my calling then I'm not going to experience the peace of the Lord.

If I'm not faithful as a Christian in my relationship to God and my place in His house then the Lord is going to have a much harder time building testimonies to use for His glory and purposes.

If I don't want to spend time with God's people and serving in the Church then I'm not going to receive those gifts of the Spirit God wants to give me in order to build up the Body.

So that's the deal. That's the kind of stuff that the Lord has made available to us in this life, but we can miss out on it if we're not living today like a real Christian. A real member of God's house, submitted to His word and His authority.

Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow may never come for us. So today is the day. Today is the day for us to hear and believe and be used and enter into the rest that Jesus promised.

While it's today, partake of Christ, be a real Christian and receive what God has stored up for you.