

## Text— Hebrews 3:7-15

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

To properly ponder our sermon text, it is necessary to know who it is specifically addressed to, and that information is supplied just prior to our Scripture selection, for we read in Hebrews 3:1-6, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

Thus, it’s clear that our Scripture selection is specifically addressed to Christians— folks who God declares holy since He imputes Jesus Christ’s perfect righteousness to them because by His grace they have faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

Therefore, let us seriously consider the fact that our Scripture selection urges all Christians:

**“HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS”**

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) When it is that we should not harden our hearts
- 2) Why it is vital that we harden not our hearts
- 3) How we can surely avoid hardening our hearts

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Verses 7 & 8, ----- (Hebrews 3:7-8)

Note well WHEN it is that we Christians should not harden our hearts, for our text opens by informing us: *the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.* Thus it is necessary that TODAY we harden not our hearts! Realize that the Word of God the Holy Ghost is for us to meditate upon each and every day that we are living on earth. Consequently, we Christians are to hear the Holy Ghost’s voice every day saying to us: *Harden not your hearts.*

Think about where we will hear the Holy Ghost’s voice. Psalm 1:1-2 states, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” Hence, we are blessed when we listen to God’s Word every day, and that Word is given by God the Holy Ghost, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” declares 2 Peter 1:21. Accordingly, it’s clear that if we would be and remain blessed we must hear the voice of God the Holy Ghost which says to us each and every day: *Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.*

Fellow Christians, realize that we are in danger every day as we are tempted to sin by the devil, the wicked unbelieving world, and our own corrupt flesh. Think about it. 1 Peter 5:8-9 warns, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” And, in Matthew 18:7 Jesus says, “Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” Furthermore, James 1:13-14 declares, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any

man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” Therefore, fellow Christians, we are definitely in danger every day as our faith is tried as we are tempted to sin in many ways, including being tempted to discard our faith in Christ in order please our sinful flesh— “to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,” as Hebrews 11:25 puts it.

Hence, let us hold fast to Christ and the hope of eternal life we have in Him, heeding our text’s warning each and every day, for *the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.*

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As we continue to ponder our text, let us see why it is vital that we harden not our hearts.

Verses 7-11, ----- (Hebrews 3:7-11)

The book of Hebrews from which our text is taken is so named because the Apostle Paul first addressed the epistle to Jewish Christians. Thus, Paul refers to an incident in Old Testament Jewish history when he writes: *Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)*

Consider what happened when the children of Israel, the Jews of old, hardened their hearts and failed to believe God’s promises: they were condemned to wander in the wilderness for 40 years and were not permitted to enter the Promised Land. The Lord was not happy with those folks, for Hebrews 3:17-19 comments, “But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the

wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” Thus, an entire generation had to die-out in the desert, and then their children entered the Promised Land.

The incident is related in Numbers chapter 14. The people bellyached and complained when the spies returned from checking out the land which the Lord desired to give the people. Of the twelve spies sent to check things out, only Joshua and Caleb came back and confidently reported that the land was good and the Lord could and would surely enable them to conquer it. And how was it that the people treated Joshua and Caleb? We read in Numbers 14:10-11, “all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel. And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?”

Moses subsequently interceded for the people as he prayed to the Lord, saying, “Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it... To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise." (Numbers 14:19-34)

Then, as if the unbelieving people's actions were not bad enough, they rebelled yet more during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. For example, they complained about not having enough food, and then when the Lord gave them manna – bread rained down from heaven – they soon grumbled and were unthankful. Yeah, Numbers 21:5 relates, "the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." Indeed, in Psalm 78 we are informed God "had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full... For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works." (Psalm 78:24-32) Sadly, instead of being thankful and praising the Lord, the Israelites grumbled and complained— they hardened their hearts.

The Jews' mind-set is described in Psalm 78:34-42, where we read, "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth,

and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." So, the Jews hardened their hearts and lied to God with their lips; let us beware of such behavior since feigned faith is not justifying faith.

My friends in Christ, it is vital that we harden not our hearts, for if we harden our hearts we will bring punishment from the Lord upon ourselves, which is why God the Holy Ghost says to us in our text: *To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.*

Now, we must also beware of sinful pride and getting on our high-horse of self-esteem by thinking we're so much better than those Jews of old and could never rebel against the Lord and fall from faith, for 1 Corinthians 10:12 plainly states, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Yes, a fall from faith is possible for any one of us if we do not heed God's Word. Any one of us can depart from God by unbelief. Hence, it is vital that we harden not our hearts.

Verse 12, ----- (Hebrews 3:12)

Observe the words of our text directed specifically to ALL of the Apostle Paul's fellow Christians, for he writes by inspiration of God: *Take heed,*

*brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* Note well that the history of the Israelites is related for our learning and stands as a warning to all of us Christians today, for we too can fall from faith if we are not careful to humbly continue in God's Word. Let us never forget that Holy Writ clearly states, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17 ) And, "the word of God... effectually worketh also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

My friends, if we fall into unbelief we will surely depart from the living God, for the Holy Bible tells us in no uncertain terms, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9)

Accordingly, it is vital that we harden not our hearts, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (Romans 10:10-13; 3:23-24; 6:23; John 3:16) Let us never forget that it is indeed vital that we harden not our hearts.

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As we ponder our text to its conclusion, let us see how we can surely avoid hardening our hearts.

Verse 13, ----- (Hebrews 3:13)

Notice that we Christians can avoid hardening our hearts and falling from faith by very regularly encouraging one another to continue in the faith, for the Apostle Paul by inspiration of God urges us: *exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Think about it. Hebrews 10:23-25 states, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Hence, regular public worship is a way to encourage one another to remain in the faith of Jesus Christ. James 5:16 instructs us Christians, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." So, spending time with fellow Christians in discussions and praying for one another at all times can be beneficial to avoid hardening our hearts.

Observe the warning in our text if we fail to encourage one another in the faith of Jesus Christ, for if we do not exhort one another daily, any one us can be hardened in our heart by the deceitfulness of sin. Yeah, if one pushes matters of faith into the background and spends too much time in worldly pleasures, one can be *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. For example, the occasional drink of wine or beer can grow into repeated drunken binges if one is not careful who one spends most time with, which is why Holy Writ warns us in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

Verses 14 & 15, ----- (Hebrews 3:14-15)

Note well the closing words of our text which stress the necessity of persisting in the faith of Jesus Christ: *For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear*

*his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.*

Observe that we are made partakers of Christ our Lord and Savior ONLY *if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.* Indeed, our confiding in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord is an absolute necessity each and every day that we dwell in this vale of tears until we depart this life and safely arrive in heaven.

Notice that we can only avoid hardening our hearts if we DAILY HEAR GOD'S VOICE, that is, if we spend time in God's Word! Daily time in Holy Scripture is vital if we would remain in the faith of Jesus Christ, grow in that faith, and be fruitful in the faith! Personal reading and study of the Holy Bible is what we are to do each and every day, for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ plainly states in John 8:31-32, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Let us therefore avoid hardening our hearts by regularly spending time reading "the holy scriptures, which are able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15)

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins. Let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord. Yes, let us heed our text which urges us: harden not your hearts. Amen.

m.e.l.