

**The Hebrews Initiative:  
Today is the Key to Tomorrow  
Hebrews 3:1-19**

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**Text Introduction:** We are in a series that we are calling the Hebrews Initiative. It is an important journey. Though not exactly the same, our circumstances are similar to that of the original recipients of Hebrews. As such, it is my prayer that this study will provide significant encouragement for us to persevere in this post-Christian and at times anti-Christian world in which we find ourselves living.

In chapter 1, we learned from this anonymous author to the Hebrews that “It all starts and ends with Jesus.” That is, in Jesus, God revealed Himself to us, represented Himself to us, and reconciled us to Himself. Then, He took His rightful place and rules and reigns in eternity.

In chapter 2, we saw a great phrase—“so great a salvation.” We discovered there that this great salvation that is promised is only possible because of a great Savior—Jesus Christ—and that this great salvation and great Savior demand a great surrender.

The sum of all this is that we must persevere in our calling and commitment. That theme becomes even more pronounced in chapter 3. Let’s read that entire text now.

**Text:** Therefore, holy brothers and companions in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession; 2 He was faithful to the One who appointed Him, just as Moses was in all God’s household. 3 For Jesus is considered worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder has more honor than the house. 4 Now every house is built by someone, but the One who built everything is God. 5 Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s household, as a testimony to what would be said in the future. 6 But Christ was faithful as a Son over His household. And we are that household if we hold on to the courage and the confidence of our hope.

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

Today, if you hear His voice,

8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,

on the day of testing in the wilderness,

9 where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,

and saw My works 10 for 40 years.

Therefore I was provoked with that generation and said, “They always go astray in their hearts, and they have not known My ways.”

11 So I swore in My anger,

“They will not enter My rest.”

12 Watch out, brothers, so that there won’t be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God. 13 But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception. 14 For we have become companions of the Messiah if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start. 15 As it is said:

Today, if you hear His voice,  
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

16 For who heard and rebelled? Wasn't it really all who came out of Egypt under Moses? 17 And who was He provoked with for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And who did He swear to that they would not enter His rest, if not those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

**Introduction:** Do you remember the Holiday Inn commercials of a few years ago. The theme of this series of commercials was the value of getting a night's sleep at a Holiday Inn Express. In one such commercial, a man has fallen when another gentleman comes to his rescue. He examines him quickly and snaps his leg back into place. The injured person says, "Hey, thanks, are you a doctor?" The onlooker's reply is "No, but I did sleep at a Holiday Inn Express last night." In another commercial with the same kind of theme, people are surrounding a man who is need of medical attention. Somebody begins to yell, "Did anyone sleep at a Holiday Inn Express last night?" Someone from the crowd says, "I'm a doctor." Brushing the doctor aside, the first man continues to yell, "Did anyone sleep at a Holiday Inn Express last night."

Ah, if only one night of rest brought us that much good. There is something good about rest though, isn't it?

The context of our Scripture reading today is the promise of entering God's rest. It is implied that the Israelites had the opportunity to be at rest in the land of promise, but did not enter that rest because they hardened their hearts. The warning of this passage in Hebrews is that those receiving the letter to the Hebrews would not make that same mistake. The warning to us in this passage is that we not harden our hearts, but instead be diligent to enter into God's rest.

The key to understanding this text is to understand the meaning of rest. Rest, here, is more than just Heaven though it could include Heaven. Rest, here, is to be where God wants me to be or put more simply...

REST ⇒ Being Right with God.

Then, there is a formula for being right with God and that formula is obedience.

FORMULA FOR REST ⇒ OBEDIENCE

Along with this idea of rest, the key word to this text seems to be "today."

Let's look closely at this text to see what we ought to be doing today to make sure we enter God's rest.

**Consider the past as an example for today!**

- (1-6) Positive Examples
  - Jesus
  - Moses

Both are examples of faithfulness. But, sometimes we learn from negative examples just as well.

- (7-11) Negative Examples
  - A Specific Example—This had to do with a specific time after the nation of Israel when they were protesting that they were thirsty.
  - A General Example—This is the general history of Israel refusing to enter the Promised Land and thus spent the next 40 years wandering in the desert.

The writer of Hebrews is warning from the past that they should not harden their hearts against the will of God.

**Continue to be engaged with people for encouragement for today!**

A second key to our perseverance is to encourage one another. When? Daily! That's today! And tomorrow, it will be today again. Encouragement is put in antithesis to "watching out." Then, the role of encouragement is completed by the "so that" clause "none will be hardened by sin's deception." The church must be encouragers, and we must be recipients of encouragement.

Harry Houdini was a noted illusionist and stunt artist of another generation. For those who have never heard of him, think of David Copperfield or David Blaine or Michael Carbonaro. Houdini is considered to be, my many, the best of all time. In March 1904, he was performing a stunt in London. He was placed in handcuffs of 6 locks on each cuff and 9 tumblers on each lock. Houdini went down into a box to pick the lock. At the 15 minute mark, he appeared. The crowd roared until he held up his hands still cuffed. He asked for more light. He went back into the box for another 15 minutes. He rose again only to declare that he needed to flex his knees. He went down another 20 minutes or so before reappearing still cuffed. This time though he took a knife out of his pocket and holding with his teeth slashed his jacket to shreds indicating that he was hot. Finally, after another 20 minutes, he appeared free and holding the cuffs up in one hand to the delight of the crowd.

A reporter asked him if his coming up was just part of the stunt. "No," Houdini replied, "I needed to hear the encouragement of the crowd." (NIV App Commentary, p. 147, as taken from Charles Swindoll, *Come Before Winter*, p. 283.)

That is exactly why later we are going to read in Hebrews 10 not to stay away from the meetings as some do.

**Carefully examine your heart today.**

- In light of the Word of God. (Hebrews 4:12)
 

Notice in verse 12 something about "The Character of the Word of God."

  - Living—The Bible is not a dead code, but one which has constant application to my life.
  - Active—The word here sounds like energy. Something can be living, but dormant. The Word of God by the Spirit of God should be active in your life. After you have read, after you have heard, the Word of God is active.

- Sharp—Sharpened by the fact that the Word of God is just that—God’s Word, not man’s word.

Then notice something about “The Confronting Nature of the Word of God.” The Word of God is confronting in that it reaches the whole person. Often we get one area under the authority of God and His Word and He reveals a new area. The Bible judges us.

So, when we recognize the character of the word of God and the confronting nature of the word of God, we see “The Challenge of the Word of God.” Do not rationalize that the Word of God is too hard. We must apply the Bible to our lives. We must allow every area of life to be brought into conformity to the Word of God.

- In light of the Watchfulness of God. (Hebrews 4:13)

This verse points to the omniscience of God. The omniscience of God is both a point of comfort and a point of confrontation. We cannot hide from God. What we cover, He will uncover. What we uncover, He will cover.

When should we do this? Today! Yesterday’s faithfulness must be renewed. The good news is that God’s mercy and grace is being renewed in us as well.

What is your response today?