

(Please be seated)

Good morning church, Let's open our Bibles to the book of Hebrews and our text this morning is Hebrews 3:7-19. My name is Mike Godfrey and I serve as an Associate Pastor here at FBCOP and this morning we continue our series through the book of Hebrews and while you are turning there, I would remind you of _____ details

- The Christians this book is addressed to are amid persecution and suffering. Later in this book the author writes this: *"³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised."*¹
- These suffering Christians were at a breaking point of sorts, there were some who were concluding that following Jesus was just too costly, just too hard and that the best solution to end the persecution and suffering was to go back to their former way of life. To attempt to relive and revive the Old Covenant. To use a popular word, to deconstruct their faith in Jesus and to reconstruct their Jewish faith.

This is one of the reasons the book of Hebrews is filled with Old Testament quotations. The author is making an overwhelming argument for the sufficiency and superiority of Christ. We saw this last week as the author showed how Moses could do them no good, because Moses though faithful continuously pointed to the one who was to come, namely the Lord Jesus.

And we left off last week with the authors appeal to these Christians to hold fast their confidence in Christ and even to boast in the unshakeable hope they had in Christ. His love for these hurting Christians fuels his appeal for them to cling to Christ rather than letting go.

Maybe you don't feel like converting to Judaism, but you might be asking in your heart this morning, do I really need to keep at this Christianity thing? Maybe you remember fondly the way life used to be before Jesus and wonder if it would just be easier to turn back? Maybe you grew up in a Christian home, and you think if I could get away from Jesus I could finally relax. Perhaps you are hurting today because life is hard for you, even this week you may have felt suffocated by suffering. For some of you this morning you might be thinking there is a real worldly benefit to turning away from Christ, maybe I'll get that promotion at work if I drop some of the Jesus talk, or students maybe your friends will like you more and include you more if you adopt the way they think and act as if Jesus isn't real. Maybe you're thinking you'll actually find rest by running away from Jesus.

If that's you this morning, thank you for being here, and I hope you'll listen to what God says because as today we'll see the only hope for the rest and peace that you and I crave is found in Jesus, so with that in mind follow as I read Hebrews 3:7-19

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 put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.*

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 10:32–36.

¹⁰ *Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, 'They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.'*

¹¹ *As I swore in my wrath,
'They shall not enter my rest.'*"

¹² *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.*

¹³ *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵As it is said,*

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

¹⁶ *For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.²*

This is the Word of the Lord...Thanks be to God!

Warnings are gifts if we would receive them and welcome them. The sirens that tell of a tornado are not impositions, but provisions. If you're a parent you know what it is to warn your children of danger. Like when it comes to music, I warn my kids regularly don't listen to Carrie Underwood and Luke Bryan that will destroy you... just kidding, but not really... The boy who cried "wolf" was evil because he warned of danger when there was none, so that when the real danger came none believed him. But church, when God provides us a gracious warning in His word it is to our great benefit to hear, rejoice and obey, so for our time we'll consider this gracious warning under two points:

Point #1 Ain't No Rest For the Wicked

Point #2 My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone

First, Ain't No Rest For the Wicked

Our text begins with an the author quoting Psalm 95. That's why in many of your Bible's the text is set off from the margin which is a visual indicator for us to note the text comes from another source. He quotes Psalm 95 – and the point he will make with this text is that there are those who witnessed the greatness of God in miraculous works, but because of their resistant and hard hearts died in God's judgment.

So in order for us to get at what he's saying its necessary to understand how he is using Psalm 95, and beyond that, what is Psalm 95 referring to. Kind of like the movie Inception, the author of Hebrews is explaining Psalm 95, which is explaining an event from earlier in the Bible – all of them pointing to the great danger of unbelieving hard hearts.

So lets follow the breadcrumbs out and work our way back in. The author is warning these Hebrew Christians against unbelief, or turning away from Christ and he uses Psalm 95 which is Psalm written explaining God's glorious and miraculous works over all the earth and the Psalmist is calling his readers and singers to hear the voice of God and resist unbelieve by remembering the terrible cost of rebelling against God in unbelief. What the Psalmist talks about takes place in Exodus 17 where we read this...

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 3:7–19.

17 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.² Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"³ But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"⁴ So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."⁵ And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.⁷ And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"³

Now did you catch that last part, though they quarreled with Moses, their rebellious heart was revealed in the offensive and foolish question, "***Is the LORD among us or not?***" – The question is offensive and rebellious because of what they had witnessed...they had seen the plagues against Egypt, they had celebrated the Passover, seen the parting of the Red Sea and the subsequent destruction of the greatest army in the world, they had been preserved and cared for by God in earth moving ways and when they face thirst they question the presence of God.

When the Lord does all His mighty deeds he can be trusted, but now they are thirsty (which is a real need) and instead of trusting the God who can move the sea, they reveal their hardened and doubtful hearts...And their doubt would lead to their death. Their rebellion led them to die in the wilderness and never enter the promised land.

The Psalmist picks this event in Israel's history up as a warning to Israelites to not repeat the sins of that generation. So Psalm 95 begins with beautiful reminders of God's grace, and then calls the hearers to not be like the generation that hardened their hearts toward God though they had seen His works before.

Both the Psalmist and the author of Hebrews highlight the underlying problem, the root cause of rebellion in the people of Israel. It was their hardened hearts...look at vs. 8 again, "***do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness,***"⁴ The problem wasn't the lack of God's provision for his people, it wasn't that God hadn't kept up His end of the bargain...no the problem was that in the time of testing instead of their faith growing, the test exposed that they actually didn't have faith in God they had hardened hearts.

If you have taken weightlifting classes, you may have learned a formula for progress; muscle fatigue that results in muscle growth is a result of time under tension. Basically, if you want a muscle to heal, repair, grow you must place the muscle under tension for controlled amount of time. This fatigues the muscle, but also ultimately stimulates growth and repair. Faith in God is similar, our trust in His character, His provision, His person grows with time under tension. Therefore, we see the Psalmist plainly state the drought and thirst of the people was a time of testing by the Lord, and the sad results of the test in that event in the wilderness revealed a people with hard and unbelieving hearts.

You see the Lord brings testing and trials to our lives. We don't get a say in what these are, because if we did we'd never introduce struggle into our own lives we'd program our lives to be a life of ease. We'd smooth our career paths, our family relationships, our physical health, our bank accounts so that our lives would meet no resistance. We don't tend to push towards struggle, and even when we do, we want to control the type of struggle, the timing of the struggle and the duration of our pain. But dear friend, you'd never truly trust God then, you'd be trusting yourself. You and I naturally want the world to bend to our wishes, and God in wonderful mercy and waves of uncomfortable grace rescues

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ex 17:1–7.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 3:8.

us from our self-infatuation with struggle. It is in the trials when we don't have the answers, or the plan that what we really believe is revealed. This is the example of Israel, they had experienced glorious redemption, miraculous power and for the lack of water they rebelled against the Lord of the universe.

And oh what their hardened, unbelieving and rebellious hearts cost them...vs. 11, *"¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"*⁵ Unbelief and rebellion brought about the wrath of God and the forfeit of rest. The "rest" that the Psalmist is referring to was the promised land. And a whole generation of rebels, except for Joshua and Caleb, died in the wilderness where they relied on self rather than God.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I do not know your struggle or your trial or your pain in these days, but I do know the God who loves you and is your heavenly Father is sovereign over every one of them. The testing He brings into our lives is not easy in the moment and yet it produces in you that which is of far greater value than whatever you lose.

Some of you know John Newton, likely because you knew he wrote amazing grace and yet he penned another hymn that captures the role of trusting the Lord in our trials called "I asked the Lord that I might grow"

*I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and ev'ry grace
Might more of His salvation know
And seek more earnestly His face*

*'Twas He who taught me thus to pray
And He I trust has answered prayer
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair*

*I hoped that in some favored hour
At once He'd answer my request
And by His love's constraining power
Subdue my sins and give me rest*

*Instead of this He made me feel
The hidden evils of the heart*

*And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in ev'ry part*

*Yes more with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe
Crossed all the fair designs I'd schemed
Blasted my gourds and laid me low*

*Lord why is this I trembling cried
Will You pursue Your worm to death
'Tis in this way the Lord replied
I answer prayer for grace and faith*

*These inward trials I employ
From self and pride to set you free
And break your schemes of earthly joy
That you may'st seek your all in me⁶*

Later in this very book the author writes to these hurting Christians,

"⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?"

*"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.*

*⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives."*

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 3:11.

⁶ CCLI Song # 1542188 - John Newton - Public Domain - For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com - CCLI License # 157000

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”⁷

You may not like that the Lord tests His people, but He does so for our good. He does so not that we might fall away, but to expose how we might grow in grace. He tests at times to reveal those who are truly His. This reality of God’s action does not make Him uncaring or unloving, rather the love He has for us is displayed in the real discipline he brings into our lives...because it is the faithful warnings of God that actually preserve us from pursuing sin which leads to death.

The Israelites failed to trust in the Lord, that He could do more than they could ask or imagine. The pain they endured did not serve to draw them closer to God, they ran from Him.

This the author of Hebrews uses as a timeless and timely example of what these Christians needed to hear. In their moment of testing, they did not need to run to a mirage of security by returning to the Old Covenant, because that’s all it was, and still is. There is no Old Covenant, it has passed away, the new has come through Christ. The dangerous lie that was tempting these believers was simply a spin on the first lie. “Did God really say?” Only instead of a tree with fruit he was tempting them to turn from the tree where the savior bled for them and the empty tomb which stood empty because He has risen.

There ain’t no rest for the wicked. Not even as the song says, “till we close our eyes for good” the wicked will not rest when they die. No friends, hell is no place of rest, hell is a place of God’s wrath and judgment, and those who die with hearts hardened in rebellion and unbelief do not enter into rest no matter how many times we say, “may they rest in peace” – The warning of not entering God’s rest is the warning to all who refuse to believe in Christ of eternal separation from grace and mercy and eternal torment under the wrath of God.

This is what the author is saying in vs. 16-19 with his series of rhetorical questions and answers:

¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? – It was

¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? – It was

¹⁸ And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? – It was to the disobedient

¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.”⁸

Therein lies the center of this warning, what the rebellion of Israel exposed was unbelief and if these Christians needed to hear and remember the unbelief of their forefathers to renew their faith in Jesus.

Thus the author of Hebrews warns these Christians to learn the same lesson that the Psalmist gave... look at vs. 12, “*¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.”⁹* The danger of unbelief does not expire. Unbelief is a root sin which poisons the growth of faith in the heart of a

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 12:4–11.

⁸ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 3:16–19.

⁹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 3:12.

Christian. So, then what must we do when doubts arise and it seems that following Jesus costs too much, well that leads to point #2

Point #2 – Find Rest My Soul in God Alone

Hebrew literature works differently than ours does. We westerners think very linear about things. We put the climax of a story at the end. But Hebrew literature functions quite differently, with the center being the pillar of truth that the text preceding and following builds to. What that means for our text is that vs. 12-14 form the central truth for the passage.

The author has shown them that there is no rest for those who deny God, who harden their hearts against Him and who turn away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what if there were means to avoid such a sad epitaph, what if this warning would serve to not only preserve the faith of the Hebrew Christians, but even embolden it. What if even in the midst of suffering and pain there was peace and hope to be found not in escape from trouble, but in the Savior who meets us in our trouble to sustain us.

This is the gospel hope of every Christian. The hope that we have is not that our lives here and now will be free from trouble and pain. No as Christians we see the evil of the world and the evil in our own hearts and we have come to know that we need a savior. We see the brokenness and hurt that sin has brought to our hearts, our lives and the world and we have seen the forgiving love of God poured out in the death of Jesus and His glorious resurrection. We have repented of our sins and trusted in Christ. We have abandoned any silly notion that this broken world even as beautiful as it is can actually give our souls the rest we so desperately need.

This is what St. Augustine prayed in the opening of his confessions, “*Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.*”¹⁰ Augustine who had lived a life of worldly pleasure, debauchery and immorality upon turning to Christ found the true rest of heart that only Jesus gives.

Perhaps you aren't a Christian here today and we are glad that you are here, but can you acknowledge that you have an inner restlessness that never seems to go away. You may be able to silence it for awhile, but no matter how you try to quiet it down, with work, or relationships, or eating, or vacations, or pleasure that you continually feel that your soul cannot rest. This is what Christ offers to weary sinners. Because God has told us we were not meant to find rest in anything or anyone other than Him. In fact, the call of Jesus is this: “*28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*”¹¹ If you are here this morning and you are tired, tired of the sins that entangle you, tired of trying to find meaning in the things of this world, this is Christ's invitation to you, to lay down your guilt and shame and fear and to receive from him the rest that your soul craves. If you have questions about what that means, or how you can begin following Christ you can talk to me or one of the other pastors or ministers after the service and we'd love to help you.

If you are a Christian verses 12, 13 & 14 each give us a concrete and practical way to find our rest in Christ now and be guaranteed to enter the rest of heaven when we die.

¹⁰ Augustine of Hippo, “[The Confessions of St. Augustin,](#)” in *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustin with a Sketch of His Life and Work*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. G. Pilkington, vol. 1, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 45.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 11:28–30.

Look back at vs. 12, ¹²“*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.*”¹² – **Step one, pay attention to and keep a close watch on your heart.** This is the task of every believer, we are not prone to godliness, no in this life we will still wage war against sin, even once we have been united with Christ we are being sanctified and we must give attention to our souls. This doesn’t mean you are getting in touch with your inner self, but rather that you are aware of what is captivating your heart. Are there areas of your life where you refuse to trust the Lord? Is there something in your life where Jesus is pulling you towards himself and you are pushing away. Are there sins that you are playing with thinking that you have them under control, and you can stop whenever you are ready? Those are indicators of unbelief. Like warning lights on your dash, when the Holy Spirit shows you sinful habits and actions, he is helping you be free of the very thing that will steal your rest and threaten your faith.

Knowing God’s rest is not being inactive, but trusting His Word and where he tells us how our lives are meant to be ordered we listen and obey because we do not desire to have our hearts hardened by sin.

Then look at vs. 13, ¹³“*But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*”¹³ – **Step 2: Lean in to the local church.** Listen brothers and sisters, *your personal spiritual growth is a community project.* Make sure you heard what I said because if you miss this you miss a central truth of the New Testament, *your personal spiritual growth is a community project.*

In our country founded upon individual freedom, we have imported those ideals into the church and they have created churches that are filled with individuals who are connected to each other in name only. We wonder why people drift away from Christ. Surely there is personal sin involved, but the church should have been pursuing the drifting ones, calling them to return to Christ. Notice the author of Hebrews says, “every day” as long as it is called “today” – he encourages these Christians to share their lives with one another for the sake of persevering in the gospel.

How meaningful this is to suffering Christians, to look at our brothers and sisters and through tears say “don’t give up, don’t walk away. Christ died for you so that you would have real hope, don’t give that away. Look to Jesus, He is with you, he will never leave you.” Maybe you recall a time when you were brought low by this life and a Christian brother or sister sat with you, maybe even in silence, but their very presence whispered the love of Christ into your aching heart.

And what about you, maybe you think of someone in this church right now, whom you know is struggling, can you not encourage them after the service, invite them for lunch today, or for coffee or dinner and encourage them. The call to action here is that we would, as a church be zealous for each other’s good, building one another up in the faith keeping each other from the lies of sin. Whether or not you know this, you have a responsibility to help each other get to heaven. It’s not dependent upon you, Jesus won heaven for you, but the real time way he accomplishes his plan to get you to heaven is through the brothers and sisters in Christ you are in a local church with.

Christians who seek to grow in Christ in isolation are not obeying this passage, in fact they are forsaking the plain teaching of Scripture that we must be working to encourage each other in the fight of faith.

Because I love Charles Spurgeon, I love how he wrote of his own view of ministry with language from Pilgrim’s Progress, “*I am occupied in my small way, as Mr. Great-heart was employed in Bunyan’s day. I do not compare myself with that champion, but I am in the same line of business. I am engaged in personally-conducted tours to Heaven; and I have with me, at the present time, dear Old Father Honest: I am glad he is still alive and active. And there is Christiana, and there are her children. It is my business, as best I can, to kill dragons, and cut off giants’ heads, and lead on the timid and trembling. I am often afraid of losing some of the weaklings. I have the heart-ache for them; but, by God’s grace,*

¹² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 3:12.

¹³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 3:12–13.

and your kind and generous help in looking after one another, I hope we shall all travel safely to the river's edge. Oh, how many have I had to part with there! I have stood on the brink, and I have heard them singing in the midst of the stream, and I have almost seen the shining ones lead them up the hill, and through the gates, into the Celestial City."¹⁴
Church let us live such a life together to make sure as much as it depends on us to help each other to heaven.

Finally look at vs. 14, ***14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.***¹⁵
Step Three – Hold your confidence in Christ firmly. When you are guarding your heart, and giving and receiving encouragement all that remains is to cling to Christ by faith. Don't surrender your confidence to sin, but rather look to Christ. Don't be troubled by the word "if" as though your salvation is in question. The author is stating that which proves true, those who are truly in Christ will persevere until the end. He also points us to one ringing truth about our assurance. If you spend your life looking inward only to find evidence of genuine faith you will struggle to believe in your security in Christ. But, if you lift your eyes to Christ you see that you will never find evidence for your redemption in yourself, you will find your redemption in the finished work of Christ, and as you look to Christ your confidence and assurance grows, because your confidence has never been that you could save yourself, it has always been Christ.

As we will sing in just a moment, "No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand, till he returns or calls me home here in the power of Christ I'll stand" Let's pray.

¹⁴ Charles H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife and His Private Secretary, 1854–1860* (vol. 2; Chicago; New York; Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899), 2: 131.

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 3:14.