

Hebrews 3:12-19**Craig Crawshaw**

Hebrews 3:12-19 *Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.”

For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

INTRODUCTION – THE DANGER OF DOUBT

Last week, Elder Dan Gaither brought the message that we must not harden our heart toward God, as did the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings. He pointed out that hardening of the heart is the result of a wrong attitude. An attitude of selfish, “woe is me” philosophy of life puts calluses on our heart toward the things of God, insulating us from being sensitive toward others and toward God’s kingdom work.

Last week’s passage was a quotation from Psalm 95 where King David uses the events of the wilderness wanderings to challenge his listeners to not harden their hearts toward God. Now in this week’s passage the author of Hebrews challenges his listeners, and us by extension, to do the same.

We are to “take care” that we do not have an “evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.” (v. 12). And it would be easy for each one of us to say “that’s not me. My heart is not evil, nor unbelieving.” But remember that our example is the lack of faith and trust shown by the wandering Israelites – this being in God’s eyes, an “evil and unbelieving heart.”

- Do we ever find ourselves asking God why things are falling apart around us, and having a feeling of “it’s not fair”?
- Do we ever find ourselves wishing that we could go back to the way things were before the present circumstance came to be?
- Do we ever find ourselves discouraged and feeling God is distant?

Well, those attitudes mirror the attitude of the wandering Hebrews, and God calls that attitude an “evil and unbelieving heart.” Why? Because that kind of a heart is not trusting God to be in control of the circumstances. That kind of a heart is focused more on self than on others or on God. And continuing with that kind of a “woe is me” heart will cause you to “fall away from the living God.”

Remember our earlier challenge in Hebrews to pay much closer attention to our salvation so that we not drift? Well this is the second step along the road to pulling away from God – doubting – doubting that God is in control and will work all things out for His good purposes.

Step One: DRIFTING. Step two: DOUBTING. And we’re going to see additional steps before the author of Hebrews is finished with his challenges.

Well, if we’re honest we all sometimes doubt that God is in our circumstances. And we all go

through times of discouragement with a bit of a “woe is me” attitude. So what is the antidote?

For DRIFTING, the author gave us the antidote of “paying much closer attention” to the elements of our salvation, not neglecting the things of God that are important to keep us close to Him – such as prayer and the reading of His Word and fellowship with other believers.

For DOUBTING, the author gives us the antidote of ENCOURAGEMENT – both the receiving and the giving of encouragement. And this is a powerful antidote indeed. And thus, I have named our message today, “The Power of Encouragement.”

EXAMPLES OF BIBLICAL ENCOURAGEMENT

√ When Moses was nearing death, God told him to **encourage** Joshua – the one who would take the children of Israel into the promised land. And Joshua rose to the task. (Deut. 1:38, 3:28)

√ When David was going through so many trials from King Saul, Saul’s son and David’s best friend, Jonathan, **encouraged** David. And David prevailed to become king and the “man after God’s own heart.” (1 Samuel 23:16)

√ When good king Hezekiah was discouraged about the spiritual condition of his people, God sent Isaiah the prophet to **encourage** the king. And Hezekiah left a legacy of righteousness despite his people’s sin. (Isaiah, chapter 19)

√ Barnabas was called so because his name means “Son of Encouragement” and that’s exactly what he was to others. (Acts 4:36) He was sent to the first Christian church of Antioch and “began to **encourage** them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.” (Acts 11:23)

In my estimation, this is the heart of encouragement – to help others to remain true to the Lord.

√ When the Jerusalem Council sent a letter to the newly converted Gentiles, freeing them from the requirement of circumcision, they had Paul and Barnabas deliver the letter, and all who heard the news were **encouraged**. (Acts 15:31).

√ When the Colossian church was being confused by the Gnostic philosophy, Paul wrote to the church praying “that their hearts be encouraged” to continue in God’s truth. (Colossians 2:2)

√ When the young Thessalonian church was being led into false doctrine, Paul sent Timothy to encourage them in their faith. (1 Thessalonians 3:2) And then they were challenged to encourage one another in their faith. (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

HEBREWS 3:13

So this is the challenge to us in Hebrews 3:13 – a critical, very important verse from God’s Holy Scripture. **This is God’s antidote to our propensity** for doubting. This is a powerful and effective way to keep hearts from being hardened, our own and others in our care – ENCOURAGEMENT. **Let’s examine this verse particularly to see what God would teach us.**

1. First note that it is a command of God that we encourage one another.
2. **The “but” is the indication that this is the antidote to a hardened heart deceived by sin.**
3. We see the IMMEDIACY of encouragement in the importance of doing it “today.” We are not to delay or put it off. **This is not something to be done “when I get around to it” or “at the earliest opportunity.” “Today” means TODAY! Do it now.**
4. Then we see the URGENCY of encouragement in that it is meant to keep others from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. The point is that we never know how critical a simple word or action of encouragement might be in keeping another’s heart soft to the Lord. God knows that we are just a discouragement or two away from “falling away.” And a timely encouragement can turn the tide of the devil’s discouragement.

5. Then we see the **CONSISTENCY** of encouragement called for in the phrase “day after day.” This is not meant to be a onetime thing – been there, done that. Rather encouragement is to be a way of life for the Christian – encouraging others at every turn and at every opportunity.

ENCOURAGEMENT (Hebrew 3:13)

IMMEDIACY - “today”

URGENCY - “that none .. be hardened”

CONSISTENCY - “day after day”

ENCOURAGEMENT – what is it?

COURAGE (the heart of the word and principle)

... to face another day

... to forgive and move on

... to love when love is not the natural response

HOLDING FAST (vs. 14)

... to the assurance of our convictions

... to our commitments

... to Christ, our mutual-partaker through all

PERSEVERANCE (Romans 15:5)

Romans 15:5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus.

ENCOURAGEMENT – what’s in it for me?

Makes me want to encourage others

Keeps my heart tender to others

Keeps me closer to God and away from sinning