

Hebrews 3

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[0 : 00] We'll do open your Bibles and turn to Hebrews chapter 3. Hebrews chapter 3, and we're in a separate series looking at daily things.

! It's the third sermon this week, I think that'll probably be our sermon, unless I can discuss some more. We saw daily support from Psalm 68, daily bears our burdens. This morning we saw daily mercies, didn't we?

God's mercy down me every morning. And tonight we have a lot of daily concern. Okay, so the text is chapter 3, Hebrews chapter 13. And the basic daily concern is this. It's that nobody falls away from the living God.

And that's the concern of the verse, that's the concern of this sermon tonight, that nobody falls away from the living God. You might say to yourself, well it's never going to happen to me, it's not bigotry. But I want to remind you that we know many people who sat in seats like you do, who've sung songs, who can sing songs like we are able to, who've listened to sermons, and they turned away.

[1 : 18] There are public examples, aren't there? Think of John Edwards, you know, the Triple Jumper, there's a documentary on him out at the moment. And he had a faithful witness, spoke publicly and clearly about the Lord Jesus Christ and what it meant to follow him.

And yet he has very deliberately and defiantly walked away with Jesus Christ. I can think of a very well known creature, a globally known creature.

And a lot of people are raised by him, yet he has walked away and he has turned away from the living God. Sometimes I go to sleep at student meetings and you sit with those lovely, zealous, but careless students who are very keen.

And yet it frees me to think that in years that come, then every one or two of them will turn away from following Jesus. And turn away from the living God. And we have to be realistic and say, well, if we're put in good by statistics, of course it doesn't necessarily mean that, but statistically you look like a congregation like ours tonight.

And if all of us are still alive in ten years, it's quite possible that there would be one or two or three who decided to give up on following Jesus Christ. Perhaps you've got started. Perhaps you've outwardly begun to give up.

[2 : 37] You're going to take away from the living God. It's a very serious and solemn thing. The writer in Hebrews 3 tells us what we are to do in this here, chapter 3, verse 13.

And we have to exhort one another every day, as long as it is called us today. That none of you may be pardoned by the deceitfulness of sin. Two headaches. First of all, the dangerous process. And then secondly, the daily situation.

And we need the dangerous process to understand the daily situation. And you probably know that this letter was written to Hebrew Christians. Jewish Christians were the last for Hebrews.

And the main danger seems to be their desire to go back on Christian life, to go back to following the Jewish way of life, to shallow land. And they wanted to go back to their Jewish roots, to their Jewish religion, which was much more visible, much more tangible, much more spectacular, much more familiar.

And it was easy for them to drift back and be Jewish. And this writer takes great care in his letter to show the readers that Jesus is actually the goal of all their Jewishness. And if they had to take their Old Testament seriously, they would come to Jesus.

[3 : 56] And when they came to Jesus, you will find the goal of the culmination of the whole of the Old Testament of the Jewish faith. And he shows them in the letter that Jesus is greater than anyone in the Old Testament.

He's greater than all the angels. He's greater than any priest. He's greater than any, than Moses. He's greater than any king. And he says a very sobering thing in verse 12, doesn't he? He doesn't want them to turn away from the living God. And now the Jew says, you've misunderstood. That doesn't apply to me. I'm going to give up on Jesus and go back to the living God.

And this writer says, no, if you give up on Jesus, you're going to turn away from the living God. Because the way to know the living God is through Jesus.

And so to prevent this downward spiral and drift, the writer sets out a series of steps that you and I may know what are the steps of turning away from the living God.

[4 : 54] So look at verse 13. He talks first of all there about sin's deceitfulness. The deceitfulness of sin. The first step in the dangerous downhill process is sin.

Now sin is simply the thing or the goal or the person who is outside the will of God. Outside the word of God.

And normally this thing is very attractive. Otherwise you're not tempted. So you remember that the original woman Eve in the garden, she was faced with the fruit and that fruit in the garden was outside the will of God.

There was masses, wasn't there, in the will of God. But that fruit on that particular tree was outside the will of God. But it was attractive to the man. Pleasing the eye. And attracted to it.

And attracted to it. And attracted to it to make her wise. And so she stepped out of the will of God and took the fruit. Well Matthew tells us in his Gospel that when the seed of the Gospel falls on thawing soil, that the seed is capable of being choked by deceitful ridges, attractive ridges, gripping magnetic things.

[6 : 12] And you and I know that there are many sins. And there are one or two sins in each of our lives that are more attractive to us than others. And the ones that are attractive to me may not be so attractive to you.

And the ones that are attractive to you may not be so attractive to me. But in the end, it is a thing or a goal or a person who takes us away from the will of God. And we know when we've crossed the line, or we may not realize that when we cross the line, is that that sin has taken us away from the will of God.

It's quite deceitful. It's quite deceitful. It's quite deceitful. It promises all that can deliver. I'm sure you've learned that in your Christian life. And yet we keep on falling, don't we?

For it's a damn appeal. And then we find that sin has not delivered on what it promised. And we go and come and come and come and say, that's the first thing I'm saying. The second thing in the process in verse 13 is the hardening.

It is the hardening which causes the thickening of the heart. I often wonder whether Christians of past generations, if they can come and time travel and come back and look at how we lived.

[7 : 32] I wonder what they make of it. And I think it would be astonishing to them to come to the 2020 church, to come to my study, and see what we regard as fairly straightforward.

The reason why you find it astonishing is because there's a hardening process. And we get used to things, don't we? And when we know our own heart, we know how easily it hardens.

And what comes into the heart is a kind of ruthlessness. A ruthless disobedience. Think of that moment. I'm sure you identify with this as I do.

When for no good reason you just say to yourself, I'm going to say that. I don't care. I'm going to do that. I don't care.

Or I'm not going to do that. I don't know what I'm doing. And we go down some track with no concern for God's will whatsoever. And sometimes we justify it, don't we?

[8 : 40] We say, I need this. Or more often we say, I deserve this. Sometimes we don't even try and justify it. We just do it.

And this hardening, this ruthlessness, is where our heart becomes like steel. It's very perverse. And it's very sinister.

And it is only God in his mercy with a very soft heart who's able to soften our heart. And to bring us back to the point of repentance, and sanity, and humility.

So the third step of the process in verse 12. There's unbelief. There's sin, a harthing. And thirdly, and more seriously, there is unbelief in verse 12.

Unbelief is not disobedience. Disobedience is one thing, but unbelief goes a step further. So think of the church member who's still doing all the abertory ministry, they're running their group, they're helping, they group happily.

[9 : 49] And they're doing their thing. But inwardly, they're getting harder. Because of some sins. And so they still know that they are some, they're eating during the week, how to put on the exterior rules.

But the internal has changed. And this particular person started off being quite convicted by their disobedience. But then they got more careless. And then there comes a crisis.

There's another crisis. There's another crisis where they stop and they say, I'm not even sure I believe this anymore. And I'm getting to the position where I'm thinking maybe this isn't true after all. And what's happening there is unbelief is setting in. It's not the same as doubts. Doubts can be a legitimate thing. Many big questions come out of the way.

We find ourselves being forced to ask big questions. But unbelief is something far more sinister. Because it involves a sort of carelessness, and a fearlessness, and a helplessness.

[10 : 52] And the last step of the process in verse 12 is the turning away from the living God. And that's what the person says, I'm not going to keep going. Now of course the healthy Christian tonight is terrifying about that.

But I can assure you that there are people that you know, and I know, who have lost all fear of doing that.

A healthy Christian knows that if they're going to lose their eternal salvation, that if they leave Jesus, they walk away from Jesus who is ever going. But this person, they fall for sin, and then hardening, and then unbelief.

And then the decision to turn away says, I don't really care. It's a very serious position, isn't it? Sin, hardening, unbelief, walking away. And it's all there in verse 13.

The word turn away is literally apostasy. Which means we get to the position of abandoning or renouncing Christ. And if you think that this will never happen to me, just ask yourself, does sin creep up on you?

[12 : 07] Because it does on me. And ask yourself, if hardening creeps up on you, because it does on me. And ask yourself, whether unbelief appears, because it does on me.

And then ask yourself, whether turning away wouldn't be the next step. It's a very serious process, and we need to believe it in order that we can appreciate the solution.

Which this writer wonderfully provides for us, and I find it helpful. To tell you the truth, that we need to be honest with ourselves every now and again. And I know that the world is kind of wanting to elevate us all the time, but the Bible is far more honest.

And tells us what we're really like. And we need to be honest with ourselves. And I find it helpful to remember that my heart is by nature, and your heart is the sin. By nature committed to sin.

And then harping, and then unbelief, and then turning away. And just as Jesus spoke in his goodness at the tomb of Lazarus, and he said, come out.

[13 : 12] And Lazarus came out. God has initiated, and God has woken us up. And just as we read in Romans 5, that God demonstrates his love in a while and still sin as Christ died for us.

God is the wonderful initiator. He is the initiator. He is the life giver so that we might not be stuck in the process of reversing danger. So secondly, that's the danger of the daily solution.

And the daily solution has got two parts to it. The first part is addressed to an individual. And the second part is addressed to your Christian brother and sister. And so the personal road is in verse 3 to verse 15.

It says this. It says, today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in your belly. Don't harden your hearts.

Don't harden your heart. Now, how are we going to hear the voice of God? How are we going to hear the word of God?

[14 : 25] And some people want to say to you, you say, well, God spoke in the past. And that must be wonderful, but all my excitement is over now. And the Bible is a wonderful record of what he said to people.

But he doesn't even say much anymore. And so we have this record of the past. But we need a word for the present. Of course, they are half correct. This is a record of what God says.

But they are mistaken. Because they have not grasped that this book, this oil lamp, is where God speaks. Other people are keen to say, God does speak today.

But they don't see the Bible as that key voice. Are they able to impress the world with some fresh message? That's not subtle. They are quite welcoming of messages.

That are perhaps supplementing the Bible, adding to the Bible. And sometimes even though we're writing the Bible. And that is a very serious mistake to make. Because these people need to go back and say, yes, God does speak today.

[15 : 38] And the way in which God speaks today is through what he has said. Do you get that? He speaks through what he said. Now, there's a fantastic illustration here in verse 3 of that.

Because the word of God in verse 15, which is addressed to people today, actually spans 3,000 years. So God spoke to the people in Moses' name.

It's about 1250 BC. And he says to the people of Israel, on the verge of going into the promised land, I want to give you a message. The message is you can go in and you can take the promised land.

And the people in 1250 BC are on the verge of the promised land and they have their hearts. And they did not enter the promised land and very few went in. And David cuts in Psalm 95.

And he's saying in Psalm 95, I want you in my generation, it's about 950 BC or 1000 BC, I want you, I want to say to you today, if you hear his voice, do not have your hearts.

[16 : 48] Psalm 95. And then the writer to the Hebrews echoes this. He says, I want to say to you, it's not 68 here. If you hear his voice, don't have your hearts.

And then we run the tape forward 2,000 years later to now. And I say to you, and you say to me, when you hear God's word, don't harden your hearts.

Because it's so easy to do it. And here is the message of not harping your heart. It says, from Moses, that David said, from the writers of Hebrews. What God spoke, he speaks. And what he said freshly through scripture is fresh for us if we will receive it.

If we're accepted. Now we need to make sure that we don't have that. Because the word of God grows out a little bit like the seed in the parable of soils. And just as the gospel goes out, it needs to be received.

And you need to receive the gospel in order to come and receive. The word of God goes out to you. And again, we need to be receptive soil. So that the word goes in and bears good fruit.

[18 : 04] Because we have our hearts so easily. Sometimes I think that our hearts are the hardest thing in the universe. Harder than a diamond is the human heart.

And because we're capable of this, we need to ask God, don't we, to soften our hearts. So that when we come, we become our listeners and receivers.

We don't say to ourselves, I'm feeling above this. I know you all. I'm careless. I'm disappointed. I'm annoyed. I'm fed up.

No, I'm going to ask the Lord to soften my heart. Please soften my heart because if you don't, if it hardens the process, it's so sinister. And we are privileged to have the word of God so freely available to us.

And we need to have a heart which was active. And so I want to finish by giving you suggestions. How do you put 3 verse 13 to daily encourage one another into practice?

[19 : 06] Daily encourage one another. And they all begin with F, right? F. Who is F? Have a fresh, crystal month.

And we all know when someone's fresh. We mostly know when someone's crystal pre-fresh. christianly fresh.

People who are going keenly. I want to urge you to be the person who got fresh Christian life. Be a good listener yourself to the word of God.

So that you have something that is worth passing on to someone else. It worries me that God's word does not ever seem to excite some Christians.

Don't worry about those people. Don't be those people. Receive the word of God in sin. In your Bible reading. Try to extract something. It's just one thing that you're able to share and pass it on.

[20 : 16] So be a fresh listener. A fresh exhorter. Sin and unbelief unharvening are such a reality. So keep here.

Secondly, be appreciative of the fellowship. Second, be appreciative of the fellowship. It's very, very, very hard to keep going in the Christian life without the fellowship.

people. And people who stay away cannot obey and they're not going to be. Chapter 3, verse 13. And that's why it's important.

It's so important not to stay away. You may be captive away. You may fly away. You may not stay away. But if you've been let down by the fellowship and some people do genuinely get let down by the Christian fellowship.

Try to put chapter 3, verse 13 into practice. And you will be proactively blessed. It is no good as we sometimes stand and grab the fellowship saying, who will love me?

[21 : 35] Who will support me? Who will look after me? You need to step out and put chapter 3 in verse 13 into practice.

To try to afford and to encourage someone else. I don't know about you, but it is a command, isn't it?

Chapter 3, verse 13. And if you come here regularly to the institution, I probably need to stay every Sunday or 10 Sundays in a row to get everyone out of the institution. But if you come here regularly, let me say that not only is the Christian life difficult, it is going to be much harder for you to be an encourager of other people who stay away.

Appreciate it much. Last note. Let's help one another to stand firm to the end. You see, in chapter 3, verse 14, we are going to go firmly to the end.

I spoke to you a long time ago and I said to you what's your pay for the Indian people's food this week, this year? And he said that they will be key Christians for the whole of their lives.

[22 : 54] It's a great goal for one another, isn't it? That every single one of us who is here will be firm to the end. that we would love to think that people will keep going right to the end.

Because God is faithful at the end and we need to hold firmly to the end. I read a story this week about a pilot who was flying from a small plane and he heard a noise at the back of the plane and he decided to leave the controls of the co-pilot to go to the back of the plane to see what there was. And he discovered that the door on the back of the little plane had latched and he was trying to latch it and it flew open and he was set down. The co-pilot saw the red light come on and he decided that he could quickly with emergency lamp put the plane down.

And he put the plane down and he already reamed you overhead to indicate the tragedy and they found the pilot clinging to the ladder at the back of the plane. He travelled at 200 miles per hour from 4,000 feet down to a landing and it took them quite a while to pry his hands off the ladder and they asked him how did he do it?

And he said I thought about the alternative. And that's exactly what the Hebrew writer is saying stay firm to the end because the alternative is so terrible and we need to involve one another daily as long as it's wrong today.

[24 : 36] That's right.