

The Book of Hebrews

Lesson 3: Greater Than Moses; Do Not Harden Your Hearts -- Hebrews 3:1-19

There is a kind of hardness that does not happen all at once. Leave a loaf of bread on the counter and it does not turn to stone overnight. It dries slowly, a little each day, until one morning you go to slice it and the knife will not go in. The heart can be like that. No one wakes up one day having decided to be hard toward God. It is a slow drying, a daily ignoring of the still small voice, a quiet accumulation of unbelief, until one day you reach for tenderness and find that something inside you has gone stiff and unyielding.

That is exactly what the writer of Hebrews is worried about in chapter three, and so he reaches back across fifteen hundred years to tell a cautionary story. He reminds his readers of the generation that came out of Egypt. They saw the plagues. They walked through the sea on dry ground. They ate bread from heaven and drank water from a rock. They had front row seats to the most spectacular display of God's power in the entire Old Testament. And they did not make it to the promised land. Not because God's arm was too short, but because their hearts grew hard, and hardness and faith cannot live in the same house.

Before he tells that sobering story, though, the writer lifts our eyes to someone greater than Moses. Consider Jesus, he says, the apostle and high priest of our confession. Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant, and that is no small thing. But Jesus is faithful over God's house as a son, and we are that house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. The story of the wilderness is not told to frighten us into the corner. It is told to keep us close to the One who is greater than Moses, the One who can lead us all the way home.

So the chapter ends with a tender, urgent plea, the same one the Holy Spirit spoke through the psalmist: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. Notice the word today. Not someday, not when life calms down, not after you have sorted yourself out. Today. The antidote to a hardening heart is a daily, present, ongoing softness before God, and the writer tells us to help each other with it, to exhort one another every day, so that none of us is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We were never meant to keep our hearts soft alone.

Group Discussion: The wilderness generation saw God's power firsthand and still fell away through unbelief and hard hearts. Why is it possible to witness God's work, even to be part of His people, and still drift into a hardness that shuts Him out?

Personal Reflection: Where in your own heart have you felt the early signs of hardening lately, a place where God's voice used to move you and now meets a kind of resistance or numbness?

Read Hebrews 3:1-19

Study Questions

1. In verses 1 through 6 the writer compares Jesus and Moses, saying Moses was faithful as a servant in God's house but Jesus is faithful as a son over God's house. What does this comparison teach about the greatness of Christ and His authority over God's people?
2. The writer calls us to consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession (verse 1). What would it look like this week for you to actually fix your thoughts on Jesus in the ordinary moments, and what usually competes for that attention?
3. Verse 6 says that we are God's house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. What does the little phrase if indeed we hold fast teach about the nature of belonging to God's household?
4. The writer warns against a heart that grows hard slowly through unbelief. What are some of the small, daily ways a believer's heart can begin to harden toward God, and which of those do you most need to watch for in yourself?
5. In verses 7 through 11 the writer quotes Psalm 95 about the wilderness generation, whom God said always go astray in their heart and have not known my ways. What does this passage teach about the connection between unbelief, a hardened heart, and failing to enter God's rest?
6. Verse 13 tells us to exhort one another every day, so that none of us is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Who in your life helps keep your heart soft toward God, and whose heart are you helping to guard?
7. In verse 12 the writer warns, Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. What does it mean that this warning is addressed to brothers, to believers, and what does it teach about the danger of falling away?
8. Sin is described in verse 13 as deceitful, able to harden us without our noticing. Where might sin be quietly deceiving you right now, dressing itself up as harmless or reasonable, and what would it look like to bring it into the light?
9. Verses 14 through 19 say that we share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end, and then conclude that the wilderness generation was unable to enter God's rest because of unbelief. Some teach that once a person is saved they can never be lost. Using this passage, how would you explain the warning that a member of God's own people can fall away through unbelief, and what this means for the security of the believer?
10. Look back across the whole chapter. The writer's great concern is that we keep our hearts soft and hold fast to Christ to the end. Name one specific way you will guard your heart against hardening this week, and one way you will help a brother or sister do the same.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 95:7–11, the original call not to harden your hearts as in the wilderness; 1 Corinthians 10:1–12, the wilderness generation as a warning written for our instruction; Ephesians 4:17–24, putting off the old self with its hardened, darkened heart; Hebrews 10:23–25, holding fast our confession and stirring one another up; Mark 4:16–20, the seed that springs up but withers for lack of root.