

“Do Not Harden Your Heart” *Hebrews 3:7-11*

INTRO:

Is there a possibility that we sincere believers in Christ might harden our hearts? You remember how when God poured out the plagues on Egypt each time Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not listen to God. The plagues were supposed to teach the Children of Israel who the LORD is. Instead, they learned how to harden their hearts against God. This is the subject of the quote from **Psalm 95** in our text today. The writer of Hebrews warns us, **“Do not harden your hearts.” (Psalm 95:8)**

The writer tells us there are three ways we can harden our hearts. We learn we harden our hearts when we forget what God has done; we harden our hearts when we put God on trial; and we harden our hearts when we refuse to believe God.

- I. We harden our Hearts by Forgetting What God Has Done (v. 7-8)*
- II. We Harden our Hearts When We Put God on Trial (v. 9)*
- III. We Harden our Hearts by Refusing to Believe God*

I. We harden our Hearts by Forgetting What God Has Done. (v. 7-8)

A. ***“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness.’ (Hebrews 3:7-8).***

Immediately we ask the question, “What does it mean to harden our hearts?” In our text, we find at least a partial answer. First, hardening our hearts means forgetting what God has already done for us.

1. The Children of Israel who were so miraculously delivered through miraculous plagues, who ate manna provided for them every day, and who had the Red Sea opened so they could cross on dry ground. Truly saw God’s miracles as the Psalmist said in the second phrase of **verse 9**. ***“And saw My works forty years.”*** When the writer cited **Psalm 95**, the question is what event or events in the Wilderness Wanderings did he have in mind? The text in **Psalm 95** mentions the two names Moses gave to the place where he first struck the rock to bring forth water for the people –Meribah and Massah, rebellion and quarrels. However, these both took place long before the forty years of wandering mentioned later in the text.

The culmination of the rebellion of the people took place at Kadesh Barnea. For these Hebrew readers all the, sights, smells, and sounds of **Numbers 13** and **14** came flooding into their minds.

2. Many of us do not have that advantage, so we need to review what took place there so we can understand. The Children of Israel have arrived at Kadesh Barnea, they sent out twelve spies to explore the land. The spies came back with a two part report. First, they reported the land was indeed all that God said it would be and more. Second, they saw the sons of Anak in the land. They were giants. Every city in the land had walls and was well fortified. In short, the task before them was an impossible one. They changed their report and said the land was an evil land!

3. After hearing the report, God's people responded. We read in **Numbers 14** these words:

“So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, ‘If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness. Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?’ So they said to one another, ‘Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.’”

They had a pity party to end all pity parties. Moses and Aaron but mostly God was to blame for lying to them and failing them like this! This is blasphemy!

4. What did God say to this later after He had pardoned their rebellion?

“Then the LORD said: ‘I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD—because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.’”

God has sworn by Himself that one day all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD! But what did these folks do to incur God's righteous wrath? They saw His glory and the miracles that He did and they failed to remember them.

C. Let us not fall into this trap. We must not accuse God of being uncaring and unfaithful to us in our trials. We must not forget all that He has done for us already Thanksgiving is for what God has already done. We need to go over our rock piles again – picking up each stone and reminding ourselves anew of God's great faithfulness to us. Let us not sin against God and harden our hearts because we have forgotten what God has done!

II. We Harden our Hearts When We Put God on Trial (v.9)

A. So, we see that hardening our hearts is, first, forgetting what God has done. Second, hardening our hearts is having the audacity to put God on trial. We see that in our text in **verse 9** recorded.

“In the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years.”

1. This is a great evil. The Children of Israel did not trust God. Instead, they put Him on trial. Several years ago, C. S. Lewis wrote an essay originally entitled, *“Difficulties in Presenting the Christian Faith to Modern Unbelievers.”* It was republished under a new title, *“God in the Dock.”* Lewis observed in the essay, *“The ancient man approached God (or even gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed. He is the judge and God is in the dock. [Modern man] is quite a kindly judge: if God should have a reasonable defense for being the God who permits war, poverty, and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God’s acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the bench and God is in the dock.”*

3. The Jewish people in Kadesh Barnea were just like the people in Lewis’ essay. They put God on trial. They put Him in the dock and assumed He was filled with evil motives and plans for them. They demanded that He prove that He was innocent of the charges. Listen to what they said. In **Numbers 14:1-3**,

“So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, ‘If only we had died in the land of Egypt. Or if only we had died in this wilderness. Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?’”

Here is the indictment against God. They accused Him of bringing them through the wilderness for the express purpose of killing them off in the conquest of the Promised Land. He brought them this far to dump them.

Then to add to their guilt, when Joshua and Caleb try to talk sense into their heads, they seek to kill them. (**Numbers 14:10**)

“And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.”

III. We Harden our Hearts by Refusing to Know God (v.10-11)

A. ***“Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”*** (Hebrews 3:10–11). This was the heart of God’s indictment against them. They did not want His ways. They wanted theirs.

B. We don’t do this do we? Do we put our intelligence, our desires above God’s will? I once knew a woman who told me she did not agree with God. I was flabbergasted. How can we mere people think that we are smarter or wiser than the One who designed and created this world and actively keeps it going?

We must ask God to help us believe Him. We must remember Who He is and what He does each moment of our lives. We are the ones who have failed Him. He has never failed us!