

We are picking up where we left off last week in this powerful passage in Hebrews 3. Let's read it once again starting in verse 7.

### ***Hebrews 3:7-19***

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 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. For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked 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 unable to enter because of unbelief.

So here is the big question that is poised in this passage. Are you going to be one of the masses that will wander around the wilderness for their entire life until they die? Or, will you be one of the few (one of the 0.0000307692307692308%) who actually choose to live by faith and enter the Promised Land where you will have the opportunity to experience the Lord's peace and rest?

Some of you might have been thinking through all of this over this past week and have thought that the wilderness is really not that bad of a place and you have actually grown quite comfortable living in the wilderness; after all, it has its own unique charm—in a desert sort of way. Besides, like the Israelites, your time in the wilderness has included a lot of “God” experiences and you're not entirely convinced that charging your Jericho, trying to kill the giants, or battling all those enemies who live in hardened fortresses is worth the effort.

I understand that line of thinking. After all, let's think about the 40 years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness circling the same mountain. First, the territory had become very familiar to them so there was not a lot to fear and after a while the unknown was pretty well known. Second, God led them everywhere. He was faithful as the cloud stayed with them through their entire time in the wilderness.

### ***Exodus 40:36-38***

Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all

their journeys, the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

Third, God was also faithful and provided for all their needs so they lacked absolutely nothing (*Deuteronomy 2:7*). In fact, their clothing did not wear out and their feet did not even swell (*Deuteronomy 8:4-5*). Fourth, God enabled these slaves to become mighty warriors and to conquer all the enemies that they found in their path (*Deuteronomy 3:6*).

Fifth, they were also able to serve God and do a lot of religious deeds. You could always find them sacrificing, washing, avoiding this or that, going to the tabernacle to see Moses talk to God, and so on to ensure that they did the right thing when it comes to their religion.

Now all of that does not seem so bad does it? They had a pretty good deal. It might be just enough to keep you nice and comfortable circling the ever so familiar mountain of the religion of Christianity. After all, the experience in the wilderness is so real and meaningful: God leads your life, you are provided for, you get to serve Him and sacrifice for Him, and there is this great body of believers who are on the very same journey experiencing God in the exact same way that you are.

But—and this is a big **“BUT”**—don’t forget, the Israelites were only in the desert because God had been provoked by them. Do not be deceived by the fact that God is so merciful and gracious and is always careful to tend to the needs and concerns of His children even when, like in this instance, they are in abject

rebellion. But the wilderness is not a place of blessing; it is a place where God is grieved.

The lord was vexed with their choice to reject him; so not one of them was allowed to enter the land. They had seen his glorious presence, partook of His miraculous provision, experienced His great salvation, were objects of His great mercy, but they treated Him with contempt; and none of those who treated Him with contempt were allowed to experience His peace, His joy or His rest. Instead, He said to them: “You will discover what it is to have me as your enemy. I will do these things to every member of the community who has conspired against me. They will all die in the wilderness (**Numbers 14:21-23; 34-35**).

They were His children yet practically, as far as their time here on earth, they became His enemies. That kind of puts a damper on this notion that the wilderness is a nice, safe, and comfortable place. Sure, they did not have to deal with the scary enemies that were in the Promised Land but they had to deal with the God who was vexed and who pitted Himself as their enemy and did not allow them to experience true peace and rest.

I find it interesting that **3:10** says that “They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways;” yet, “go astray” is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> party present passive tense. As you know the passive tense means that it is happening to them and since it is in the present tense it is their regular everyday experience. And the fact that it is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> party means that something is causing them to go astray. What would do that? What would cause them to always go astray? To understand the answer we need to look at **3:19** and the rest of **3:10**.

According to **3:19**, the cause of everything was their unbelief. It is because of their unbelief (their lack of trust) that they were relegated to wander in the wilderness until they died. It is because of their unbelief that God became their enemy. And, according to **3:10**, their unbelief was a result of the fact that they never really knew His ways (“known” is in the gorist active tense).

They experienced God’s presence, they experienced His detailed involvement in their lives, but the sad thing is that they never knew Him in any personal or intimate way. To them He was still just this intangible presence. For sure they expected Him to do His “God stuff” and take care of them; but they were like the ultimate users and refused to give themselves to Him in any sort of mutual relationship.

They did not comprehend that God was their Father, and they were His children, so they could trust Him. They did not stop to consider that there was a real relationship that needed tending. They also missed the fact that everything He communicated through Moses was so they could get to know Him—know what His personality is like, know why He did things, and how He did things.

To them God remained intangible; as a result, they had nothing permanent on which to anchor their lives and so they just naturally drifted astray—it’s what happens! Yes; it is what always happens!

Over and over they provoked God with their unwillingness to trust Him or even get to know Him, so He swore in His wrath that they will not get to have Him or enter into His rest. Sure they were still the people of God but they ended up never experiencing the benefits of being in a true legitimate personal and intimate mutual relationship with the living God.

What was missing? Trust! They could take from God but they absolutely refused to trust themselves to Him. They placed a higher emotional value on the tangible things of this world than on the God who delivered them. I guess I can understand (to some extent) it given that their psychology had probably been pretty bent after spending generations as slaves constantly being oppressed by their enemy. But still, their refusal to be in a trusting relationship with God is really quite astonishing when you consider what we went over last week and all the amazing ways that the supernatural was constantly and daily invading the natural world for their benefit.

They had all the proof they wanted that there was a God; that He was a big God; that He was bigger than their enemies; that He loved them more than anything; that nothing or no one could stand in His way; and that they were assured victory over every enemy. However, when it came to betting their lives on the truth they never really **considered** Him and all they had learned about Him. They, like so many of us, never considered Jesus. Their hearts had become hard by the deceitfulness of sin.

What freaks me out about this entire passage is that it totally sticks the pin in the bubble of our nice, safe, and comfortable “religion of Christianity” where we like to get really busy for God serving, sacrificing, taking, and using but never really trusting ourselves to the ***person*** of Jesus Christ—never really knowing the ***person*** of Jesus Christ. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts! Do not do it. It is clear that God was grieved with their decision to live in unbelief and not trust themselves to Him. So what about you?

### *Hebrews 3:12-15*

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 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. For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

There is so much in just these 4 verses. First of all there is a seriously intense warning. Take care, brothers! Yes, remember, we are talking about born-again believers—children of God—fellow Christians. Take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God; a heart that is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Let's think about this idea that the heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Do you think their constant complaining and lack of appreciation for what God had done was sin? Do you think their always wanting more and more was sin? Do you think their being afraid of the enemies was sin? Do you think that their failure to do their sacrifices in the way prescribed was sin? Do you think that their rebellion to Moses was sin? Do you think that sexual immorality was sin? Do you think that intermingling with certain foreigners was sin?

They did a lot of "bad" stuff for sure, but all of it was merely the fruit of sin; it was the byproduct of having a heart that had been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. The only way we are going to be able to understand this is to go back to a couple of examples I have used in the past. This is important so I want you to

really pay attention. [\[Diagram 1\]](#) True Biblical sin occurs deep within the corridors of our soul. It occurs when we choose in any area of our lives to give ourselves to our **Old Sinful Nature** and not trust the Spirit of God who lives within our **New Creation**. It is at the fulcrum of decision where sin is birthed.

Remember we are bifurcated beings and we have two natures that are longing to control our lives: one being our old familiar friend, the **Old Sinful Nature** (also referred to as our heart, the flesh, the Old Man), and the second being the Spirit of God in our **New Creation**. Both of these natures are always speaking to us and our choices are never free from the conflict between these 2 natures.

Let's take an example. You are single and you have been frustrated wanting to have a significant other in your life and you are exhausted of waiting and waiting for God to bring you the man or woman of His choosing. You become annoyed not knowing how long you might have to wait. So you start to listen to your emotions and respond to your pain and you begin to move from trusting that Jesus is sovereign over your life and that He knows what is best for you. You think (in your own wisdom) that He is not going to do this for you and that this area of your life must somehow be exempt from His desire for you. So you take matters into your own hands and you go after what you want.

Sin was birthed as soon as you decided to not rest in God's sovereignty over your life choosing to believe, in the face of all that He has done for you, that His plan is not what is best for you and that you are the one who really knows better what you need and when you need it.

Think of how many times you do this a day and in how many areas of your life where you chose to trust your own wisdom and your own emotions and refuse to



believe that Jesus is your God, that Jesus is gigundus, that Jesus is involved in the details of your life, that Jesus has a plan for your life, that Jesus intends on fulfilling that plan, and that since He loves you it is the best plan in the whole wide world.

How many times do you convince yourself that as long as you are serving and sacrificing for God and doing what you think He wants (which often is really what you want) that it somehow excuses the decisions that you make in your own wisdom? It happens all the time. This is the sin of the heart; the **unbelief** that ultimately plays itself out in sinful behavior.

And it is all so deceitful because our heart is wicked and by its very nature is deceptive. **Jeremiah 17:9** says that our heart is more deceitful **than all else** and is desperately sick. If that is the case, why do we not let the Word of God be truly authoritative over our lives? Why do we not live in the place of total desperation where we are convinced that we must know what God wants for our lives and we must wait for God to do His “God stuff?” Honestly, with a heart that is so sick, we must never ever take matters into our own hands; in fact, we must refuse to take matters in our own hands!

The heart is deceitful because it is so good at convincing us that what we are doing is not really all that bad and is probably what God wants anyways. It speaks to us using a lot of God talk and so it softens us to the fact that it is lying. The not so funny thing about all of this is that we kind of actually know way back in our minds that all of this is happening. We know that if we were to ever step around our emotions for one moment we would be able to see all of it—which is why we

tend to stay tucked safely behind our emotions so we do not have to be confronted with the truth that we have chosen to be our own god.

**[Diagram 2]** Remember, there is no middle ground of goodness. Either what we choose to do comes from God (in our *New Creation*) and is therefore by definition good or it comes from our *Old Sinful Nature* (what is referred to as our heart in this context) and is by definition deceitful, sick and evil (no matter how much it is wrapped in good religious talk and behavior).

Now just so you know the word we have translated “fall away” is the same Greek word where we get our English word “apostasy.” So it is a pretty serious thing to harden your heart to God.

**[Diagram 3]** This brings us back to the diagram depicting the corridor of our soul where we have all these rooms that the Lord wants to occupy (our Promised Land) but we keep Him out because we have been deceived by our pain and the circumstances of our lives into shutting the doors to Him.

We have been told by our *Old Sinful Nature* that God is mean, that He always hurts us, that He has no goodness for us, that He cannot be trusted because of all that He has allowed in our lives, that He will make us wait forever, that His goodness is really something to be experienced only in the after-life, that He really does not care about the details of our lives, that He has given us a mind so we can use it and we don’t need to be so radical and crazy to think that we have to hear God in everything, and so on.

So the doors remain shut and your heart is hardened. With every door that is shut sin rules and reigns from behind those doors and sinful behavior is produced from your life.

Now I want to make a clarification since many of you might already be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Sinful behavior is not just the “bad” stuff; but it is often expressed through Christians in some very religious ways. It is expressed through a lot of righteous deeds—all of which you are so convinced will please God. But is really no different; it is still just sin. If your choices do not derive from God in your ***New Creation*** according to His will for your life then it is sin. There is no if’s, ands or buts about it.

Let’s think about this in relational terms. You probably do not even realize that throughout the years so many doors have been shut as you have made it a habit to rely on your own wisdom. As a result, you find that you are not emotionally connected to God and you have become detached from your convictions. What you used to know and accept as truth has now become nothing more than good words (actually “good” words that now tend to really annoy you).

This separation spreads and before you know it you are mad at God because you are not experiencing the things that He said good Christians should experience: peace, rest, joy and a load that is light and a burden that is easy. So you start thinking that nothing is real and you live as a believer who has resigned themselves to wandering in the dry, dry desert.

As a result, you will either strive to get super busy for God in an attempt to get what you’re looking for (even through the thought of truly experiencing peace in your body and a sense of joy all seems like a surreal dream or a mirage) or else you will start to further disassociate with God and the things of God.

You may stop reading your Bible as you don’t see the need. You won’t ever really pray as that just seems like a waste of time. You probably will stop going to

church and have very little to do with the things and the people of “Christianity.” You will even be embarrassed by it all. Instead, you fill your life with other stuff in an attempt to find the peace you so desperately desire. As a result, the heart gets harder and harder and there is simply no room for friendship with God much less a mutual relationship where you trust yourself to Him.

This is why it is so easy for the “black birds” that we talked about last week (the demonic spirits) to swoop in and steal away any truth that you might receive. The soil of your heart is so hard that the seed cannot sprout any roots and anchor to the ground. So it is easy for the birds to pick up and take away. This is all depicted in the story of the sower and the seeds in **Matthew 13:3-9** and each of you should go study this passage and understand how it applies to your life.

Now because of this reality, we are commanded to presently and actively exhort one another to trust God so not one person in this body goes apostate in any area of their heart. We are to encourage each other to venture into the closed doors and work through expelling the enemies so Jesus can occupy more and more rooms within your heart. We are to encourage each other to be like Joshua and Caleb—to truly believe such that we are willing to bet our lives on all that we have learned about God—and we are to exhort in this manner every day.

Obviously this means we must be in relationship with each other in order to have access to one another’s lives. And “relationship” does not just mean that we hang around together doing fun stuff and chilling, but it means that 1) we let each other have access to speak into our lives, and 2) we actually are willing to speak the truth into the lives of others without fear of the repercussions.

This requires an amount of humility that is so rare. It requires the humility to believe that the Bible speaks authoritatively when it says that your heart is desperately sick and full of deception. It requires the humility to believe that left to yourself you will blind yourself to the truth. And here is the truth: we all need the help. We all need others to watch out for the signs of *unbelief* as it tries to creep into our lives.

And for those that God desires to use to speak into our lives, this also requires an amount inordinate and unparalleled level of humility. You must have the courage to speak to others even when they may not want to hear the truth. It requires a total dependence upon God trusting that He will be there to care for you and love you even though others may treat you horribly for taking the risk to speak truth into their lives. It requires a level of humility that is able to love others through this process knowing full well that your heart is just as sick and depraved and by the mercy of God you have been spared.

I want to make one other point and to do so I will once again draw from the story of the Israelites and their wandering in the wilderness. Even though Joshua and Caleb were the only 2 who believed and had true faith, God did not let them enter into the Promised Land until there were a whole host of others who truly believed and all those who refused to believe died. That took 40-years; the same long 40-years that the entire community had to trudge.

So the reality of their promise was deferred because of the unbelief of others. That totally blows. I don't want that happening. God has made me and many of you some pretty cool promises and we have to all come together in belief and in our faith so that we can all realize the benefits of these promises together. We

are all connected in this family and if we are not careful we can drag each other down in the sense of delaying the wonder that God wants us to know in Him. Our life of faith is a team effort; so do not harden your hearts! Don't do it!

**3:14** says, "For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end." When we first came to Jesus we had great confidence—we trusted Him with our lives. We knew He loved us and died for our sins and we were so excited by the reality that we were washed in His righteousness. But for some of us that fascination faded as fast as it came. For some others it might have lasted a while longer but it seems that we all got washed over with unbelief and chose to wander the wilderness of the "religion of Christianity."

But if we hold our confidence firm, if we trust in Jesus as we did at first, then we will share in Christ. We will experience Him in a very personal way every day of our lives. We literally get to participate in His person; it will be a union of great emotion and affection, a union of dependence and love. That is what is captured in the Greek phrase: "metochoi tou Christou" or partners in Christ.

Let me give you an example. I have purposely made myself open and vulnerable to certain people in my life—those that I consider to be real partners in this life of faith that God has asked us to lead—and they get to share in me. They get to know me in very deep, personal, and intimate ways that others simply do not get to share; as such, we also get to enjoy each other in the fellowship of deep intimacy. That is what is being depicted here.

But do not be deceived, Christ is only experienced in this way when we hold fast in faith until the end. Sure all believers get to share in the glories of the afterlife (this we all possess), but only those who live by faith get to share in the

glories of eternity now, in this life; the glories of personally knowing the living God and Jesus Christ.

Are you not sick of it all? I mean sick of striving and trying so hard to get what you want when you want it? Even if you get to taste of the best that this world has to offer your life still always ends up hollow and empty and feels like you are just circling the same mountain over and over; and you will continue to do so until the day you die.

However, the fact that you are here tonight means that God wants you to have more. He has trusted this message to you so that you can choose to stop wandering in the wilderness and start living by faith. He wants you to take over the territory within your soul. He wants you to experience, His rest. He wants you to experience His peace and joy. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

Are you going to finally make the choice? You need to bet your lives on the fact that:

- The Promised Land is yours for the taking;
- He will go before you in everything;
- He has saved you and what a great salvation it is;
- He will deliver you and destroy all the enemies in your land;
- He will make the walls of your Jericho (your biggest fear) fall as if on their own accord;
- He will give you the power to go to war against all the dysfunctional coping mechanisms which dominate the territory of your heart;

- He will give you the wisdom to war and to learn how, in every room of your heart, to take on each and every lofty thought that raises itself up against the true knowledge of Jesus Christ;
- He will be your defender and He will keep you safe;
- He will be your provider of your needs;
- He will lead you in all things in your life—even in the smallest details;
- He has a marvelous plan for your life and He wants you to experience in all its glory;
- He will work all things in your life according to the kind intention of His will;
- There is a place of rest and peace (in this life) and it is yours to experience in the fullest; and
- All He allows in your life is an expression of His great, unending and unparalleled love for you.

You have heard His voice tonight. Do not harden your hearts. Do not be deceived into thinking this is all too hard, all too impossible, and all too crazy. He does not think it is. I know that to the “rational” mind the way that God wants us to live is crazy. He wants us to live letting Him have absolute control as we absolutely surrender to His will and wisdom for our lives.

Yes, I said, “we must let go of our intense desire to control every aspect of our lives!” Most of us cannot even imagine what that would look like and it scares us. Still, He wants us to live as spiritual beings who have been sent into a physical world and not the other way around. He wants us to live as children of God who



exercise His authority over the darkness. He wants us to live because of who He is and who we are to Him.

I know that so few out there really understand this way of living or approves of it. They may understand the words and the ideas, but they cannot understand the experience because their hearts are given over to their own wisdom and they simply do not really know God (and they never have really known Him) in the personal way that He desires. They may be busy serving and sacrificing for Him but still they do not know Him.

Serving and sacrificing in the wilderness is all fine but if that is how you want to live then you are just serving time until you die. But here is the good news. According to **4:1** God's promise of entering His place of rest still stands. The offer is still open for you; it's not too late. But only those who believe can enter His rest. You just have to choose to be a Joshua or a Caleb.

Please, do not harden your hearts! We will continue with this next week as we cover Chapter 4 and understand further this place of rest that God has promised those who believe and those who are willing to enter into the Promised Land and by faith clear out all the enemies.

Let's Pray.

Diagram 1

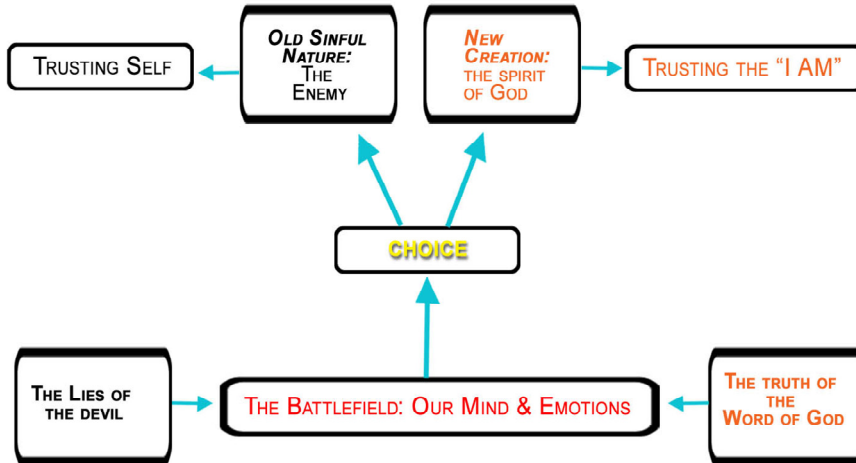


Diagram 2



Diagram 3

The Corridor of Our Soul

