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Today, If You Hear His Voice, Do Not Harden Your Hearts

The Second Warning - 3: 7-19

The Danger of a Hardened Heart: Unbelieving Jews

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts DIG: Why does God warn us? To what incident does the quotation of TaNaKh refer? How did the people of Isra'el harden their hearts? What were the results? What does it mean to turn away from the living God? What is an apostate? Why was God angry with the wilderness generation? What role do believers play in keeping us pointed in the right direction (verse 13)? What will be the outcome of faithfulness (verses 14-18)? What does it mean to enter God's rest (verses 11, 18-19; 4:1-11)?

REFLECT: What is the only unpardonable sin? What are some practical ways they you can put verse 13 into practice? Does that make you nervous? How might reaching out to others actually help you? What has been one of the most rebellious times in your spiritual life? What resulted from it? Who (or what) helped to bring you back? How would you describe your heart right now? Soft? Hard? Cold? Warm? Why? How could you respond to someone who said they couldn't live by faith?

From **Genesis** to **Revelation**, the Scriptures warn that the wrath of **God** is inevitable if people continue to sin. Since **Ha'Shem** takes **no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezeki'el 18:32)**, and is not wanting anyone to perish, but that everyone to come to **repentance (Second Peter 3:9)**, **He** continually warns mankind. This is one such warning. **ADONAI** warns unredeemed men and women to turn to **Yeshua Messiah** before it's too late. Many people know the facts of the gospel but have never committed themselves to **Jesus Christ**. To know the truth but not act on it brings a worse judgment than never to have known at all. This warning is to Jews who knew the gospel, but because of their love of sin or fear of persecution, they had not committed themselves to what they knew to be true. This is the second of **five warning passages (to see link click [Ag](#) - The Audience of the Book of Hebrews)**.

It is as if there was a fire in a hotel and people are on the tenth floor. Because there is a net

below, the firemen are yelling, “Jump, jump.” But they do not jump. They hesitate. They are well aware of the danger and they know the net is their only hope, but they do not act on what they know to be true and necessary. They might be concerned about saving some of their possessions, or perhaps they think they can find another way out. Some might even be concerned about how they would look while jumping. But the point is this: simply knowing about the danger and knowing the way out of it will not save them. If they don’t jump they will die. When your life is at stake, doing nothing shouldn’t be an option.⁹¹

The illustration of unbelief: The writer gives us a picture of what he is talking about from **Psalm 95:7-11**. Although **David** wrote this **Psalm**, it speaks about the time of **Moshe**. It is a moving example of the problem many Jews faced in the time of the early Messianic Community. It describes Isra’el’s disobedience and rejection of **ADONAI** in the **Exodus** wanderings. David used this story to warn his people of against **unbelief**. A thousand years later the writer to **the Hebrews** used it for the same purpose. Nearly two thousand years later the warning is still valid.



Therefore, as the Ruach ha-Kodesh says. The word **therefore** reaches back to the three preceding arguments. In view of the fact that **Messiah** is **better** than **the prophets (1:1-3)**, **better** than **the angels (1:4-14)**, and **better** than **Moses (3:1-6)**, the warning is: **Today, if you hear God’s voice, don’t harden your hearts.** The word **today**, of course, indicates urgency. In other words “right now!” These **Hebrews** were already hardening **their hearts**. Inspired by **the Ruach**, the author urged **them** to stop, turn, and repent. Today lasts only as long as there is an opportunity to decide. When the heart is soft, when the conscience is sensitive, when the intellect is convinced about **Messiah** - that is the time

to decide. Otherwise that person's **heart** will become spiritually **hard**, stubborn, and insensitive. The gospel no longer has any appeal. When a person's **today** is over, it's often too late.

Don't harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing (see the commentary on Exodus **Cu** - Strike the Rock and Water Will Come Out of It) **in the wilderness where you put God to the test (3:7-8 CJB quoting Psalm 95:7b-8 CJB)**. It was if the author was saying, "Don't do what the children of Isra'el did even after they had seen proof of **God's** power and care for forty years. They continued in their disbelief. Don't do that! You never know how long you will have to decide." **In the time of My favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2). God's** time for salvation is always **today**.

In his earlier ministry D.L. Moody often would end his message with, "Go home and think about what I've said." One night in Chicago he told the people to do this and come back the next night ready to made a decision. That night the great Chicago fire of 1871 broke out, and some who had been in his congregation died. That was the last time he told anyone to think over the claims of **Christ** and make a decision later. **Today** signifies the present time of grace. People today, as in the time of Moody, and in the time of the **Hebrews**, and in the David, and in the time of **Moses**, never know how long that time of grace will be for them.⁹²

Unbelief never has enough proof. Asking for more proof is merely a pretext, an excuse, and a delaying tactic. **The Israelites** kept **testing God**, and **the time of testing** lasted **forty years (Exodus 17:1-2). Yes, your fathers put Me to the test; they challenged Me, and they saw My work for forty years (3:9 quoting Psalm 95:9-10a CJB)**! The Greek word test (*peirazomai*) means *to put to the test to see what good or evil may be in a person*. What an insult it flings in the face of an all-loving, all-powerful **God**. The first century readers of this letter are warned not to take that same attitude toward **YHVH**. Yes, they were being bitterly persecuted because of their profession of **faith** in **Messiah**, but they needed to trust **ADONAI** in the midst of it all and not **harden their hearts** against **Him**.⁹³

The Israelites thought **they** could go **their** own way and do **their** own thing, but **they** couldn't. Sin is deceiving. It takes you further than you want to go, and costs you more than you want to pay. Sin makes darkness seem light, bitter seem sweet, slavery seem like liberty, and wrong seem right. Most people do not need more proof that **ADONAI** is real or that **Yeshua** is **His Son**. They need to hate and repent of their sin and to commit themselves to **Him**. A **God** who is continually **tested** will never be accepted. The one who

tests God toady does so for the same reason that **the Israelites** did in **Moshe's** day - to put **Him** off, because they love their sin, their own way, their own plans far too much to give them up for **God's Way (Acts 9:2)**.⁹⁴

Therefore, I was disgusted with that generation - I said, "Their hearts are always going astray, they have not understood how I do things" (3:10 CJB quoting **Psalm 95:7b-8 CJB)**. The objects of **God's** loathing were the rebels, **that generation** that perished in the wilderness. **They** could not, and did not, enter into **the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 12:9; Psalm 132:8, 14)**. **"In My anger** against **Isra'el's** sin **I swore that they would not enter My** permanent **rest** in Canaan," in contrast to the slavery of Egypt (**Hebrews 3:11 CJB** quoting **Psalm 95:10b-11 CJB)**. It is **God's rest** that **He** would give to **His people**. It refers to the permanent and tranquil **rest** promised **Isra'el** in Canaan if **they** obeyed **His** Word. Unfortunately, even the generation that entered **the Land** enjoyed no permanent **rest** because of sin and was taken into captivity. **The remnant** that returned from the exile was governed by successive Gentile empires until 70 AD when **it** was scattered over the then known earth.⁹⁵ Ultimately, **God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6)** will never occupy all **the Land** that **ADONAI** had promised **them**, nor enjoy the *shalom* that **He** said would be **theirs** until **the Messiah** comes and institutes **His thousand-year reign** (see the commentary on **Revelation Fj - My Chosen People Will Inherit My Mountains**).

The invitation to end unbelief: Watch out, brothers and sisters, so that there will not be in any one of you an evil heart lacking trust, which could lead you to turn away (Greek: the root word is from *histemi* meaning *to stand off from*) from the living God (3:12 CJB)! And that is exactly what **some of them** were doing, standing aloof from **YHVH** (see the commentary on **Jude Ah - Godless People Have Secretly Slipped In Among You**). The idea is not of departing, but standing aloof from. Our word *apostasy* is derived from a form of this Greek word. **Some** of the Jews in this Messianic community, should **they** renounce **their** professed **faith** in the B'rit Chadashah and go back to the Levitical sacrifices, would be *apostatizing*. **Their** choice was clear: Levitical sacrifices or the crucified **Messiah**!

The phrase **brothers and sisters** is not a reference to believers; when the writer addresses believers, he refers to them as **brothers and sisters whom God has set apart (3:1 CJB)**. Here he merely addresses **fellow Jews**. He warns **them** that if **they** reject **Yeshua** as **Messiah**, **they** are rejecting **God**. **They** were on the verge of **faith**, but had not committed. **They** had rejected the wooing of **the Holy Spirit**. This is the only unpardonable sin (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Em - Whoever Blasphemes Against the Holy Spirit**

Will Never Be Forgiven). They were in grave danger.

No matter how close you are to **faith** in **Jesus Christ**, if you never commit yourself to **Him**, you have an evil heart of **unbelief**. Your punishment will be even greater because you have departed from that which you knew to be true. **Hebrews 6:6** says: **It is impossible for them to be brought back to repentance. They** turned away from **the Truth** and from life itself. When a person hears the truth of **Jesus Christ**, acknowledges that it is true, and then turns their back and walks away . . . there is nothing else **Ha'Shem** can do.⁹⁶

The instruction against unbelief: Instead, encourage (Greek: *parakeleo*, meaning *come along side to give help*) **each other every day, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you will become hardened by the deceit of sin (3:13 CJB). This echoes a well-known exhortation found in the Talmud, "Rabbi Eliezer said, 'Repent on day before you die.' His disciples objected, 'Does one know in advance the day of one's death?' He replied, 'All the more reason to repent today, lest you die tomorrow! In this way, your entire life will be one of repentance' (Shabbat 153a)."**⁹⁷

They were especially urged to help their **unbelieving** Jewish brothers and sisters by **encouraging them** not to **harden their hearts** but to accept **Yeshua** as **Messiah**. When a person becomes hardened, they are rarely aware of it. They can hear the gospel over and over again and not respond. But the same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. If your heart is not melted by **faith**, it will be hardened by **unbelief**.

The old sinful nature suggests that trusting in **Christ** is no big deal. Becoming a believer in **Yeshua** is too costly, too demanding, too restrictive, too boring, and, above all, unnecessary. Many lost people think, "I take care of my family, I'm a helpful neighbor and a good citizen. I'm not perfect, but I'm not evil either. I'm not going around robbing banks for heaven's sake. My life has room for improvement, sure, but it doesn't need saving." But **God's** assessment is quite different: **But those who are righteous will live their lives by faith, and if they shrink back, I will not be pleased with them. However, we are not the kind to shrink back and be destroyed; on the contrary we keep trusting and thus preserve our lives (10:38-39 CJB)!"**⁹⁸ The choice is clear. Once reaching the age of accountability everyone has the same decision they cannot escape. What do believe about **Jesus Christ**. Either you believe in **Him** and who **He** says **He** is, or you fall back into hell for eternity (see the commentary on **Romans AI - The Evidence Against the Pagan Gentile**). You don't get to heaven by what you *do*, you get to heaven by what you *believe*.

None of us are immune to temptation. Given the right situation, you and I are capable of any sin. **ADONAI** knows this , so he has assigned us as individuals the responsibility of keeping

each other on track. "Mind your own business" is not a phrase that believers should use. We are called and commanded to be involved in each other's lives. If you know someone who is wavering spiritually right now, it's your responsibility to go after them and bring them back into the fellowship: **If you know people who have wandered off from God's truth, don't write them off. Go after them. Get them back (James 5:19 The Message).**⁹⁹

For we have become sharers in the Messiah, provided, however, that we should hold firmly to the conviction we began with, right through until the very end (3:14 CJB). If we really believe the gospel, if we have committed our life to **Yeshua Messiah**, then at the end of the day, at the end of the year, at the end of our life, our commitment will still stand. The greatest proof of salvation is continuance of **faith** in **Christ**. The true believer stands with **Jesus: If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples (Yochanan 8:31).** When someone departs from the gospel, backs away from the **faith** they once professed, we can only conclude that they never really believed in the first place. **They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us (First John 2:19).** Staying with **the Lord** marks the difference between possession and profession.¹⁰⁰

The issue of unbelief: Those who fall short of salvation do so because of **unbelief**. **God's** blessings are available to those who take hold of them by **faith (11:1)**. Some people claim they can't live by **faith** - they have a pragmatic, empirical mind that has to have all the facts. However, when you think about it, everyone lives by **faith**. You live by **faith** when you eat at a restaurant. You live by **faith** when you drive a car. No one drives in constant fear that around the next bend they will smash into a forty-foot-high concrete wall; we **trust** the people who made our highways. When crossing a bridge, we don't expect it to end halfway out. If you can put your **faith** in the highway department and the people who prepare your food, you can certainly put your **faith** and **trust** in the **God** of the universe.¹⁰¹

The appeal to turn to **the Lord** without delay is repeated again for emphasis. **Now where it says, "Today, if you hear God's voice, don't harden your hearts, as you did in the rebellion," who were the people who, after they heard, quarreled so bitterly? Ha'Shem** had become angry with **all those whom Moshe brought from Egypt** who would not believe and used them as an example. At the borders of Canaan they had refused to follow Caleb and Joshua into **the Promised Land** and exhibited a lack of **faith**. The inspired author pleads with his readers not to follow that example and suffer the same fate. **And with whom was God disgusted for forty years? Those who sinned - yes, they fell dead in the Wilderness! Unbelief** forfeits blessing and brings judgment (see the



commentary on **Jude Aj - The LORD Delivered His People Out of Egypt, But Later Destroyed Those Who Did Not Believe**). **And with whom was it that He swore that they would not enter His rest? Those who were disobedient (3:15-18 CJB). They** were of that non-persuadable type that would not listen to reason, stiff-necked and obstinate. The writer says, “don’t be like **them**.”¹⁰²

In the final analysis, **their disobedience, their insubordination, their rebellion**, led to **their lack of faith. So we see that they were unable to enter God’s rest because of lack of faith (3:19 CJB)**. Do you know someone who professes to be a believer but has walked away from the **YHVH**? On the basis of what you have learned in this teaching, how would you evaluate him or her? Begin to pray for that person, and ask **ADONAI** to give you an opportunity to share this warning, and the boldness to confront your friend with the consequences of continuing to walk away from **God**.