



- Thou Shalt Not Rebel Against God
- Thou Shalt Not Harden Your Heart
- Thou Shalt Not Neglect Fellowship
- Thou Shalt Not Have False Assurance

Thou Shalt Not Rebel Against God

[Hebrews 3:7-11](#) “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.’**””

The writer of Hebrews quotes from Psalm 95, which told about events that took place before the Israelites entered the Promised Land. They were camped at Rephidim and needed water to drink. They began to complain to Moses. God instructed Moses to strike a rock with his staff. It was the same staff Moses held in his hand when parting the Red Sea. Moses obeyed, and water came from the rock. Moses named the place “Massah and Meribah.”

Notice that the writer of Hebrews changes some of the words found in Psalm 95.

[Psalm 95:8](#) “do not harden your hearts, **as at Meribah**, as on the day **at Massah** in the wilderness,”

[Hebrews 3:7-8](#) “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,”

Meribah means quarreling and Massah means to test. Both refer to turning away from God, especially when He is offering a priceless gift. Their rebelliousness that took place at Meribah and Massah continued, and finally resulted in the people of Israel wandering in the wilderness for forty years. Their rejection of God’s plan had devastating consequences.

To avoid disaster in our own relationship with God we should not make a similar mistake. Followers of Jesus Christ are offered a priceless gift from God: the forgiveness of sin and eternal life. The writer of Hebrews realized that some people who had once claimed to be Christians later turned away from Jesus Christ. He wanted his readers to recognize that they were in danger of losing their faith if they did not act soon. If they could identify the early warning signs, then they would be able to hold on tightly to their faith in Jesus Christ.

Pay attention to this warning! The people in Moses’ time wandered for 40 years in the wilderness until every one of them died, except Joshua and Caleb. Don’t be like them.

At the end of verse 11 God says, “I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’” During the time of Moses, the people rebelled against God, and had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. They never stayed in one place long enough to call it home, and as a result they could never experience coming home to rest. All this happened because they had rebelled against God.

We find entering rest also mention in Deuteronomy 12:9 “for you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance that the Lord your God is giving you” ESV. When God said this to His people, they had not yet crossed the Jordan River and entered the Land of Israel. Notice what God said next:

[Deuteronomy 12:10-11](#) “But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety”

God told the new generation of Israelites that they needed to shape up. From the moment they crossed into the Land of Promise, they would need to act like God’s people. This was made clear in [Deuteronomy 12:8](#) ““You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes.” It would no longer be acceptable to do what seemed right in their own eyes instead they would need to do what was right in God’s eyes. In other words, they needed to obey God. We need to take that warning to heart as well.

Do your actions and thoughts line up with what God has commanded in the Bible? I believe that every one of us, must admit that we are sinners and that we do not always think and act according to God's commands. God wants us to act like people who belong to God.

"Wake up!" says the writer of Hebrews. "This is serious! This could be your last chance. Don't miss it."

Thou Shalt Not Harden Your Heart

[Hebrews 3:12-13](#) "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.**"

What hardens a person's heart? Hebrews 3:8, says, "do not harden your hearts." These words were first spoken to the disobedient Israelites. Hardening of the heart can cause a person who once claimed to believe to fall away from faith in Jesus Christ.

Verse 13 tells us to make sure that "**none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**" Before a person commits a specific type of sin their sensitivity to that kind of sin is strong. But after giving in to that temptation many times, their resistance to that kind of sin grows weaker and weaker. Eventually, their conscience almost disappears. As the writer of Hebrews says, such a person has become "**hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**" Their heart used to be receptive to God, but now it is hard, like a turtle's shell. Nothing of God's goodness can get through to it.

Believers must do two things. First, they must examine their hearts for indications of sin, especially patterns where sin has begun to take over their lives. Believers must be uncompromising and take a long, hard look at themselves. If they let sin take over, they will "**fall away**" (verse 12).

Second, believers must guard one another against sin. When they see serious, sinful behaviors in other believers, they need to "exhort one another." When should they do this? "As long as it is called 'today.'" (Hebrews 3:13) In other words, now. Are you willing to listen to words of correction offered to build up the body of Christ?

Before you start looking for people to exhort, be sure to read what comes next.

Thou Shalt Not Neglect Fellowship

[Hebrews 3:14-19](#) "For **we have come to 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.**"

Here's the big question that will put exhorting fellow Christians into the right perspective: Why do you come to chapel services? Why did you read this sermon? Is it to share in Christ or for some other reason? The writer of Hebrews makes himself very clear: "**we have come to share in Christ.**" Because some people had wandered away from faith in Jesus Christ, the only explanation for their behavior is that when they came to worship it was not to share in Christ. We should be coming so that we can share the love of Christ. This means both giving and receiving His love. Picking away at someone may feed my ego by making you feel superior. We must avoid that kind of motive. We must seek to lift up Jesus and His people, not bring others down.

People wonder why Moses and the Israelites were unable to enter the Promised Land so they could find rest. Why? "**They were unable to enter because of unbelief.**"

What is the great risk for believers, who might be tempted to wander away from Jesus Christ? Unbelief.

Be careful how you think of unbelief. Sharing with fellow believers about our doubts and questions should help all of us to grow stronger in our faith. When a believer faces doubts the first thing they should do is to ask for prayer from other believers whom they know they can trust. We should not hide our doubts from each other. When someone shares that they are struggling with doubts don't hit them over the head. Let them know that most Christians struggle with doubt from time to time. Encourage your brother or sister in Christ, don't beat them up.

What the writer of Hebrews wants us to take seriously is the kind of attitude that tolerates sinful actions. When we grow numb to our sins we are in dangerous territory. When sinful desires take control, we are no longer resisting evil, or acting like people who believe in Jesus. Expecting that sinful behavior will bring us happiness or relief, is a sure sign that we are not trusting God as our source of strength. If we try to solve our problems by doing what we know is sinful that is the kind of unbelief we need to avoid most.

Are you disobeying God? Do you know you are sinning? Seek victory through Christ, don't surrender to sin. Victory may not come right away, but Jesus will help you to move toward victory. Whatever you do, don't move away from victory in Jesus.

Thou Shalt Not Have False Assurance

[Hebrews 4:1](#) "Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it."

As those who believe in Jesus Christ, we need to understand that everything about our relationship with Jesus Christ hangs in the balance, due to our response. Will we continue to stand with believers, or will we part ways?

Having come so close to true faith in Jesus Christ we could still turn away. We don't really know yet if we are going to stand firm our faith in Jesus Christ.

Some believers have the idea that if they are confident that they are saved, that's all there is to it. What we learn in Hebrews is that although God knows who will finally remain faithful, we don't. If that makes you concerned, it's supposed to make you concerned. Don't take your salvation in Jesus Christ for granted.

I remember a friend in high school who told me that when he was a child, he had attended Sunday School. He said a prayer, and confessed faith in Jesus Christ. He assumed that meant He was saved, and nothing could change that. But when I knew him, he was far from living for Jesus.

Unfortunately, this is a false confidence. If we are not walking with the Lord, we cannot be assured of our salvation. A true believer walks with Jesus, as the Apostle John says, "If we say we have fellowship with him (Jesus) while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (1 John 1:6). A person who believes in Jesus Christ is transformed. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Does this mean that a true believer never sins? No. True believers can and do sin. However, when true believers sin, they will confess their sins and repent. When they repent and confess their sins, they are forgiven. They don't continue to "walk" in those sins. They stop, repent and then walk "in the light".

In practical terms, there is great danger when a person claims to believe in Jesus but walks in the darkness without repenting. They have no reason to claim to belong to Jesus. Their conscience has gone dead. They no longer act like a believer.

One of the marks of a believer is staying in fellowship with other believers. 1 John 2:19 says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.” John is referring to people who used to fellowship with believers but left the fellowship. “They went out from us.” Were they believers who lost their faith? No, “they were not of us.” They only appeared to be genuine believers. Later in the book of Hebrews we will read: Hebrews 10:24-25 “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” We can’t encourage each other to continue walking with Christ if we have no contact with each other. Believers must stay in fellowship with other believers.

There are basically two options for those people who claim to follow Jesus: Walk with Jesus and fellow believers or lose all assurance of your salvation. Can God still bring you back? Only God knows the answer to that question.

We’ve been thinking a lot about rest, but much of what we’ve said might keep us up at night because we’re not sure if we are really going to enter into God’s rest. The writer of Hebrews offers this piece of wisdom: “The promise of entering his rest still stands.” How can we have assurance that we are going to enter that “rest”? By continuing to believe in Jesus, obeying Jesus, and staying in fellowship with Jesus’ people. If you’re not doing one or more of those things, ask Jesus to help you, and He will.

Hebrews 3:7–4:1

I Y L H T F O R T Y K K
S L A T S W A E K A T S
T O D A Y I S T T R S Y
K H I R A L N N H A W A
K D Y W W D T E E E O W
N O I L L E B E R H R D
N O I T A R E N E G E S
H K N O W N N S F K N E
L E E S R E H T O R B I
E R A C D S C V R E S T
S W O R K S O I E A Y S
T N A S T R A Y O Y A E
R H Y S P I R I T V S T

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 have come to 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. Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

(ESV)

Page 5. Exported from [Logos Bible Software](#), 3:12 PM March 5, 2022.