

HEBREWS 3:7-19 "He who stands firm to the end will be saved."

**Hebrews 3:7-19** <sup>7</sup> Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, <sup>8</sup> DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, <sup>9</sup> WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED *Me* BY TESTING *Me*, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. <sup>10</sup> "THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS'; <sup>11</sup> AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'" <sup>12</sup> Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, <sup>15</sup> while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME." <sup>16</sup> For who provoked *Him* when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt *led* by Moses? <sup>17</sup> And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? <sup>19</sup> *So* we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

Last week we saw how Christ has made us into a holy temple for Him to dwell in that He might be magnified in our lives. As such this holy temple is also referred to as living stones in 1Pet.2:5. Here in our text we are called Christ's house. In Eph.2:19 we are seen as members of God's household. But so as not to relegate our relationship to God as some cold and sterile building which houses His Holy Spirit we see that this household is family. We are in God's family and we together are family.

GAL 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

It is no coincidence that the household of God is a designation for the place at which God resides with His people. We see this all

throughout the Old Testament where God is seen to dwell in the midst of His people.

**Genesis 28:12-17** <sup>12</sup> He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. <sup>13</sup> And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. <sup>14</sup> "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. <sup>15</sup> "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." <sup>16</sup> Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." <sup>17</sup> He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! *This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*"

Jacob understood that God was in his midst and this was the place at which he met with God, the house of God, the gate of heaven.

Throughout the Old Testament God continued to meet with His people Israel as they too were able to approach God as God inhabited His house, His tabernacle, which was set strategically in the midst of the nation.

**2 Chronicles 5:13-14** <sup>13</sup> in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD *saying, "He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting,"* then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, <sup>14</sup> so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

It is this house that represented the house that all of God's people would become; not a house made of brick and mortar but a living house in which God dwells.

**1 Peter 2:4-5** <sup>4</sup> And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, <sup>5</sup> *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual*

*house* for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

<sup>NAU</sup> **1 Timothy 3:15** but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in *the household of God, which is the church of the living God*, the pillar and support of the truth.

Both Peter and Paul were Jews and both knew the connection of the terminology that was used of Old Testament Israel and the fulfillment found in Christ as the physical descendants of Abraham would be identified as Israel through Jacob, but in Christ are now identified as spiritual Israel as both Jew and Gentile would make up one new people in Christ.

**Romans 9:6-8** <sup>6</sup> But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; <sup>7</sup> nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." <sup>8</sup> That is, *it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.*

You and I in Christ, no matter our ethnicity, are the children of God the children of the promise given to the true Israel of God.

**Ephesians 2:14-16** <sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

There is only one people of God and it is those who have placed their faith in Christ. The church is the household of God as was foreshadowed through the physical nation of Israel who rejected their Messiah and has since had their house become desolate.

**Matthew 23:37-38** <sup>37</sup> "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. <sup>38</sup> "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

The true house of God is the house that Christ built and continues to build as He brings His people into His kingdom, both Jew and Gentile.

**Romans 3:29-30** <sup>29</sup> Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

It is in this context that the writer of Hebrews can say to both Jews and Gentiles...

**Hebrews 3:6** <sup>6</sup> but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house-- whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Israel did not hold fast nor put their confidence and the boast of their hope in the living God firm until the end. And the writer of Hebrews would remind his readers that persevering to the end is an indication of the life that God has given them in Christ.

But this family, this house, is to be loyal to Christ to the very end. And this is why the writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers to understand that "we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast."

There is always the danger of people thinking that now that we're in it makes little difference how we walk together with God and His family. And so salvation becomes a sort of fire insurance for some people with that attitude. And thus the term "Once saved always saved" can be used as an excuse for sin.

With this fire insurance attitude can come a false sense of security. And simply because at some time in someone's life they walked down an aisle or made some sort of profession of faith, or they signed on the dotted line that on such-and-such a date you gave your life to Christ, they have in many cases placed their faith in that event rather than on the One who says in MAT 10:22 ".....but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

Many, if not most of the those receiving this letter were Jews, thus the title handed down to us, the letter to the Hebrews. This was a time in church history which was very volatile because many of the Jews who came to Christ still had much of their baggage they brought with them.

This is why Paul was so adamant not to allow anything to cloud over the one true gospel, and the reason for this is because this all has to do with life and death. The wrong message will produce a false security when that security is placed in anything man can add to his salvation which is in Christ alone.

Thus, when he wrote to the Galatian church, which was made up of many Jews, he warned them not to try and incorporate the law of Moses as a prerequisite for entering into life with Christ. They were trying to force the Gentile converts to be circumcised according to the law if they were truly to have eternal life in Christ. In addition to that they wanted the law to be the focal point in their daily activities as it related to worship and life.

Paul told them in GAL 1:6-9 "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel - 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not to be tampered with in any way, shape or form. Again, the reason is because there is only one way of salvation and this salvation is of the Lord not of man or anything man could bring to it to make it more effective. To alter it in any way is to create a false gospel with eternal ramifications.

In turning away from the one true gospel and embracing anything other than what was delivered to us by Christ is to fall into the danger of turning away from God. This is what Paul meant when he wrote in GAL 1:6 "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel..."

The Jews who were being addressed in this letter to the Hebrews were potentially in that danger of going back to the ways of the old covenant, and thus would in fact, be turning away from Christ. This is what the writer of Hebrews refers to as the hardening of our hearts to the things of God as we substitute our ways of reaching Him with the only way found in Christ alone.

The question comes up however, can a true believer in Christ turn away from his Savior and eventually reject Him as the only way to the Father? And can a true believer harden his heart to the degree that he would fall away from the living God and be lost forever?

The answer is a resounding, NO.

The writer of Hebrews is, on the one hand, encouraging these people with the hope we have in Christ and yet on the other hand he's pointing out that it must be a sure hope, not a false hope which may acknowledge Christ intellectually, but whose heart was never really turned to Him, which will be evident over the long haul.

This is what happened to Israel in the desert. They saw the wonders of God and accepted it as truth. And yet their hearts never really left Egypt and the old ways which depended on their own wisdom and strength. When they were asked to live by faith in this awesome God, when the testings came, their true faith became evident. It was a faith in themselves for deliverance, not in God.

You'll notice in our text this morning that twice in verses 7-11 the hardness of their hearts was the cause of them not trusting God and wanting to follow Him. Again, it was not an intellectual problem. They witnessed the miracles from God with their own eyes. Their brains computed the evidence. It was indisputable. But it was their hearts which rejected the notion that God was their only way of salvation, not only from the desert but from their sins.

And in verse 13 the same thought is applied to those Jews who are being addressed by our writer. 13 "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

This was a warning to the church and its individuals that this is not a game. This is not a club we were called into by God. He has purchased our lives, we no longer belong to ourselves. We belong to our King and Lord, Jesus Christ who has given us His life.

But again, the question remains. If these are true believers being addressed how can they find themselves having their salvation being jeopardized through disobedience and unbelief which is what the hardening of the heart toward God is as we see in HEB 3:18-19 "And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief."

Keep in mind that the church as a whole is being addressed. And so the writer of Hebrews is addressing everyone who finds themselves in the called out community which we know as the church. And what we find is that there will always be those who do not truly believe and yet they still enjoy the blessings, to some degree, associated with the Body of Christ.

This doesn't mean they are necessarily trying to deceive anyone about their salvation, it's just that their faith is not a faith that will endure to the end because their faith is not placed on the Rock of their salvation. Their faith is not a saving faith. They're content to think that going to church, meeting with God's people, listening to the word of God is their ticket to heaven. It's a works oriented, performance oriented approach to their salvation. It's not a trust in Christ alone and a surrendered life which depends on the Spirit's strength to follow Him by faith.

And what did Paul say to the Galatian church when they took this approach of undermining the Gospel as they walked according to their own understanding in replacing Christ alone with man's approach to God? "Let him be accursed or eternally condemned." Paul is not creating a judgment of his own, he's simply stating the fact that if you believe this false gospel of your works, which adds to what Christ did, then you've created a false gospel which can't save and will result in eternal condemnation.

And the message to the Hebrews is that if you would not believe God and you disobey His gospel which is by faith in Christ alone, then you have something to worry about in falling away from the living God.

It's not as though this person is falling out of salvation, because he hasn't really believed. Rather he's falling away from where God has been leading him to Himself. And in one's quest for reaching out to God they are in a sense falling into His grace as they receive the truth. The question is are they willing to embrace the truth by faith and then live in that truth to the end, or will they continue to fall away from God through disobedience and unbelief?

The point the writer of Hebrews is making is that there are only two camps. Those who truly believe and those who do not believe. He's not suggesting that one can have a true faith and then lose it. Remember, even the faith we have in Christ is a gift. There was nothing we could do to earn the gift of salvation and to suggest

there's something we can do to lose it is to misunderstand the gift we have.

A gift is given by God and it is God who will keep that gift alive in us to the end. So, why warn the church in this way of holding firm until the end? I believe there are a couple of reasons. There will always be those in the church who need to be challenged to quit trusting in themselves for their salvation and turn exclusively to Christ.

But I also believe that every believer must always be reminded that this gift is not to be taken for granted and that this gift of life must produce life in us so as to prove the existence of Christ's life working in us.

I quoted a verse earlier to demonstrate that we are personally responsible to endure to the end.

PHI 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,..."

What I didn't do was to continue what Paul said there as the personal responsibility of each believer is coupled with the grace of God which will assure that each of us will endure.

PHI 2:13 "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

And so you see the warning goes out to all of us in the church. To those who are nominal and on the fence in unbelief this warning is designed to urge them to stop the unbelief and disobeying the command to trust Christ alone for their salvation. But, this is also addressed to believers to consider their responsibility to walk with Christ and demonstrate His fruit in our lives as we trust Him daily.

The hope for those who fit in the first class of people is found in HEB 3:14-15 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. 15 As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

Today is the day of salvation for those who have hardened their hearts in unbelief. But for the believer the same holds true. Today is the day we stop hardening our hearts to the things God wants to take control of. Today is the day God wants us to trust Him for



everything. Today is the day He wants us to look to Him as the deliverer that He is.

What's interesting about this is what we read in HEB 3:7-8 "So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert,..."

The Holy Spirit of God is saying this. Our Creator and God is saying this. We might say to ourselves periodically in life, ' I wish God would speak to me and make my path straight. Here it is. The Holy Spirit says.

And what the Holy Spirit says to you and me in Christ is what we also find in 2PE 1:4-11 "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. 10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

You may have noticed that the list given in 2Peter is very similar to the list given by Paul in GAL 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

What both Peter and Paul are saying is that if you have been saved by Christ through faith then you have His Spirit. And if you have His Spirit, His Spirit will begin transforming your life to be more like Christ and the fruit of that life is what we find in 2Peter and Galatians. You can't make that up. Only God can produce that kind of life in Christ.

And so, when Peter say's, "make your calling and election sure," he simply means to say measure the life you have in Christ by His word and be assured that His Spirit is doing the work in you as

only He could. On the other hand if one does not possess the fruit of the Spirit in any measure than the question needs to be asked if that one has truly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ with his heart or simply with his head.

This is similar to what Paul said in 2CO 13:5 "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you -unless, of course, you fail the test?"

This is a spiritual gut check. But it's not as though Paul means to say, test to see if you have salvation today. And then if you answer in the affirmative you check again tomorrow as though it were some fleeting sort of salvation.

He's simply saying dwell on this salvation and consider how this new life in Christ is working itself out in your life as you submit to Christ by faith, and allow His Spirit to produce His fruit in your life. The only way someone could fail the test is by not truly believing that Christ died for the penalty of your sins and then rose from the dead. But if you've believed then there will be His fruit.

And the fruit and the desire to please Him will last a lifetime. It may be up and down at times but the desire to get back up will be there. Grieving over sin will be more prevalent than a cavalier attitude toward sin which doesn't care. In fact, when we sense we grieve the Spirit it's precisely because the Spirit indwells us. But our desire to get off the path of displeasing our Lord and back on the path of turning to Him will take the day, because He will make sure it will, because you're His child in Christ.

He loves us too much to let us wander very far. This is why Paul tells us in EPH 4:30 "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." It is possible for God's people to grieve Him and yet we are not unsealed. The Spirit of God Himself has sealed us for the day of redemption, which means we're going to make it home by God's grace.

Jesus' words should encourage every child of God found in JOH 10:27-29 "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."

If you've placed your faith in Christ for the remission of your sins then you can be assured that you have salvation and that you are a child of God and that no one will snatch you away from God. But what that should do is humble us before God and in gratitude want to grow in this grace and follow our great Shepherd wherever He leads as obedient children because we love Him. That's the mark of a true believer.

A believer will persevere to the end because God perseveres with us and will enable us to walk with Him faithfully because He is faithful to us. Paul put it this way in PHI 1:6 "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

For the unbeliever it's a struggle and it's frustrating trying to make salvation happen with their supposed good works which they offer to God. Only the shed blood of Christ will satisfy the Father as we place our faith in the Son who came to take our place.

John makes it abundantly clear in 1JO 5:11-13 "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

There is life in no one else. And if you have life in Christ you can be assured that He has every intention of giving you everything you need to honor Him. You will persevere to the end in His grace and strength, which is a great motivation for seeking Him diligently.

Let me close with an encouragement from this letter found in HEB 10:22-24 "let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

We're in this fight together and together we can encourage each other to take one more step when we feel we don't have any more to give. But don't ever forget, it's not our strength God wants us to move in but His. Like Paul may we say "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (PHI 4:13)