

THE DANGER OF UNBELIEF

TEXT: HEBREWS 3:7-19

Introduction:

1. Unbelief is a terrible sin. It is the sin that sends sinners to hell.
2. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15, 16).
3. “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).
4. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).
5. First John 5:10 says, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”
6. Many other Scriptures could be cited, showing the danger of unbelief. Those who do not believe in Jesus are calling God a liar.
7. Those who do not believe in Jesus will spend eternity in hell.
8. We must believe the Word of God. “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith...” (3:7).
9. Our author is quoting Psalm 95:7-11.
10. “To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.”
11. Notice, he does not say, “As David saith” or “As the Psalmist saith,” etc. He says, “As the Holy Ghost saith...” (3:7).
12. Second Timothy 3:16 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

I. UNBELIEF AFFECTS CHRISTIANS AS WELL AS THE UNSAVED

1. Notice in Hebrews 3:12, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”
2. These warnings in the epistle to the Hebrews are addressed to Christians.

3. They are not teaching that a believer can lose his salvation. But they do teach that a Christian can lose his joy, lose his blessing, lose his peace of mind, lose his family, and lose his reward.
4. Second John 8 says, “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”
5. First Corinthians 3:14 and 15 says, “If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”
6. A backslidden Christian cannot lose his salvation, but he could lose his reward.
7. Like Lot, he could lose his family. If all we had to go by was the account in Genesis, we would not think Lot was a saved man, but II Peter 2:7 and 8 refers to Lot as a “just” man and a “righteous man.”
8. Hebrews 3:13 says, “But exhort one another daily...” Not just on Sunday morning, but “daily.”
9. A similar statement is found in Hebrews 10:25, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”
10. Frequent exhortations will protect us from being “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (3:13).

II. UNBELIEF HAS A HARDENING AFFECT (3:7-19).

1. Note the repetition – “harden,” “hardened,” etc. (3:8, 13, 15; 4:7).
2. Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”
3. Because sin isn’t always punished right away, sinners do not believe what the Bible says about the judgment of God.
4. They begin to despise God’s patience, mercy, and longsuffering, and their hearts get harder and harder.
5. This hardening process also affects Christians. I have seen Christians harden their hearts. They bristle when you try to correct them. They make excuses for their backsliding, etc. They point to others who have sinned and say, “Look at him” or “Look at her.”
6. Backsliding is usually very gradual. God wants us to be “stedfast unto the end” (3:14).
7. Many Christians start out well, but do not finish well. Notice the words – “firm unto the end” (3:6); “stedfast unto the end” (3:14).

8. This warning in 3:7—19 refers to the Israelites in the wilderness who hardened their hearts – over 3,500 years ago.
9. David applied the warning 3,000 years ago.
10. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews applied the warning 2,000 years ago, and he says, “Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts...” (Heb. 3:7, 8).
11. And we can apply these words “today” (cf. 3:15; 4:7). The word “today” is found three times in our text (and twice in Hebrews 4:7, which is a continuation of the same theme).
12. Cf. Hebrews 3:7, 13, 15. The Hebrew Christians were looking backwards to Judaism, but the Holy Spirit said to them, “To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts” (3:7, 8).
13. The “hardening of the heart” is a spiritual disease, similar to the stiff neck. Once a person adopts a fixed attitude of rebelliousness and disobedience, his heart gets hard to the things of God.
14. Donald Guthrie wrote, “A hardened state of mind becomes impervious to God’s voice and leads to increasing ignorance of his ways, not because God does not want to make them known, but because the hardened mind has no disposition to listen.”
15. It is easy to apply these warnings to the unsaved:
 - They have hard hearts (3:8).
 - They provoke God to wrath (3:8).
 - They tempt God (3:9).
 - They grieve God (3:10).
 - They do always err in their heart (3:10).
 - They are ignorant of God’s ways (3:10).
 - They bring down the wrath of God (3:11).
16. How can these severe warnings apply to Christians (“brethren” – 3:12)?
17. Christians miss out on God’s rest, God’s blessings, God’s perfect will for their lives, etc. (3:11).
18. It took the Israelites 40 years to enter the Promised Land, a trip that should have taken them 11 days (3:17).

III. UNBELIEF ALWAYS LEADS TO UNREST (3:11, 18, 19).

1. The wicked are always restless because of unbelief. Isaiah 48:22 and 57:21 says, “There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.”
2. But God’s children are to enjoy peace and rest. David said, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters” (Psalm 23:2).

3. But sometimes Christians do not enjoy peace and rest because of unbelief. Mark 16:14 says, “Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.”
4. Do you remember when the disciples were unable to cast out the demon from the young boy and they came to Jesus and said, “Why could not we cast him out?” (Matthew 17:19).
5. Our Lord said to them, “Because of your unbelief” (17:20).

CONCLUSION:

1. In the Bible, Egypt is a picture and type of the world (3:16).
2. “Rest” (3:11) in this context refers to the Promised Land.
3. Christians often refer to the Promised Land as a picture and type of heaven, but actually it is a picture and type of the Gospel blessings we receive when we go forward for God.
4. When they entered Canaan, the Israelites faced frequent conflicts and attacks from the Canaanites and Jebusites and Amorites and Philistines, etc.
5. But there will be no warfare once we enter heaven.
6. This passage reminds us that the Promised Land is a picture of our rest in Christ.
7. Our Lord said in John 10:10, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”
8. Many Christians miss out on the joys of that abundant life by unbelief and disobedience.
9. Furthermore, they must be chastened by the Lord (cf. Hebrews 12:5-11).
10. Also, they miss their reward at the judgment seat of Christ, as well as their privileges in the millennial kingdom.