

FIX YOUR MIND ON JESUS

Series pt 4: Hebrews 3:1-4:1
Stonebrook Sunday AM, 2/11/24, Matt Heerema

Please turn with me to Hebrews chapter 3.

In today's passage, we come across the first of several warning passages in the book of Hebrews. The passage warns us to "watch out, in case any of us has an evil and unbelieving heart", and to not "harden our hearts" when God commands us. It seems to warn us that if we don't hang on to the end we will not be considered part of God's house, and that there may be the possibility of being found lacking in the end, having "fallen short".

These types of warnings can be alarming for Christians!

For many of us, we already have anxious dispositions, or for a variety of reasons lack self confidence. Perhaps through our upbringing we learned to fear authority figures or parental figures, and so warnings like these in our passage today cause extra distress. "Will I fall short?? What if I don't make it?"

Others, maybe more like myself, for different reasons struggle with an overabundance of confidence. We're not easily phased by things. In fact, warnings like these may cause us to bristle rather than cower, to dig in our heels rather than listen up. Or perhaps we're prone to dismiss these warnings, assuming that they are not talking about us.

I think its highly probably that these kind of warnings really are meant more for those of us in this second group.

I'd like to take a look at our passage today, and show you what I see as going on with these warnings, why the author uses them, and how he intends for us to react to them.

Let's read.

Hebrews 3:1-4:1 (CSB)

1 **Therefore**, holy brothers and sisters, who share in a heavenly calling, **consider Jesus**, the apostle and high priest of our confession. 2 **He was faithful** to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was in all God's household.

3 For **Jesus is considered worthy of more glory than Moses**, just as the builder has more honor than the house.

4 Now every house is built by someone, but the one who built everything is God. 5 **Moses was faithful as a servant** in all God's household, as a testimony to what would be said in the future. 6 **But Christ was faithful as a Son** over his household. And we are that household if we hold on to our confidence and the hope in which we boast.

7 **Therefore**, as the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you hear his voice, 8 **do not harden your hearts** as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your ancestors tested me, tried me, and saw my works 10 for forty years. Therefore I was provoked to anger with that generation and said, "They always go astray in their hearts, and they have not known my ways." 11 So I swore in my anger, "They will not enter my rest."

12 **Watch out**, brothers and sisters, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 **But encourage each other daily**, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception.

14 For we have become participants in Christ if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start. 15 As it is said: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

16 For who heard and rebelled? Wasn't it all who came out of Egypt under Moses? 17 With whom was God angry for forty years? Wasn't it with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

1 **Therefore**, since the promise to enter his rest remains, **let us beware that none of you be found to have fallen short.**

SOME BACKGROUND

It is important to keep in mind that the book of Hebrews was primarily written to Christians who had come out of Judaism. At the time in the culture it seems that there was a lot of pressure, probably from their family, community, and surrounding culture, to abandon faith in Jesus and return to Judaism.

This pressure likely came with persecution: physical, social, and emotional threats. And it seems that the author is writing to a population who is really wrestling with whether clinging to the faith is really worth it.

Perhaps it would be easier just to give in and go back to the old ways. And the author has several main arguments against this. First, there is no going back, Jesus fulfilled and did away with the Old Covenant and it is no longer an option, and secondly, even if it were, Jesus is vastly superior in every way to the Old Covenant, why go back?

The author calls this letter “an exhortation” in chapter 13. In this exhortation he uses several tactics. He compares Jesus with the different facets of the old covenant to show Jesus’s superiority, he uses encouragements to press on and keep going because it is worth it, and as in today’s passage, he also uses warnings.

Our passage today starts with one of those comparisons. He compares Jesus to Moses. For a Hebrew, Moses with *the guy*. Next to God, you had Moses his chief prophet. The one through whom God communicated His law and covenant. And the author says Jesus is even more important than him. This would have been a very impactful claim.

Our chapter today starts “therefore... consider Jesus...” – Now, whenever you come across a “therefore” when reading the Bible, you want to know what the therefore is there... for... In this case, it is in light of everything in chapters 1 and 2. On the basis of the truth about Christ from chapters 1 and 2, that he is the creator and sustainer of the universe, greater than the angels, the exact representation of God, that he is *Himself God*... because of all that...

CONSIDER JESUS

Now, the word “consider” is technically a fine translation of the word used here in the Greek, and it is the most common English translation of the word, but in common usage I think “consider” does not carry the same weight that the author intended. When we’re at a restaurant and we ask for a Coke to drink, and the waiter says ‘sorry we don’t have Coke, would you *consider* a Pepsi instead?’ You maybe pause for a second, “mmm, sure that’s fine.”

That’s not what consider means here. Other translations say “think carefully about”, or my favorite “fix your eyes on”. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Because of who He is and what He has done, fix your eyes on Him.

Yes, Moses was great, yes Moses was important, but he was only ever a servant in the house. Jesus is the builder of the house. Jesus is the son over the house, the master of the house. Pay attention to Jesus.

THE BIG “IF”

And then in verse six we come across our first BIG “IF” statement. We are part of that house that Moses is also part of IF we hang on to our confidence. We see it again in verse 14: “we have become participants in Christ if we hold firmly to the conviction we had at the start...”

That’s a really big “if”. What happens if we don’t hold on? This is where the worry sets in.

The solution here is to pay attention to the verb tenses in the “if” statement.

In verse 6: “We *are* (present tense) that household if...”, and in verse 14: “We *have become* (past tense) participants in Christ if...” NOT: “We *will be* that house hold if...” or “We *will be* participants in Christ if...”

And that is significant. Why? Because you do not become a member of the household, or a participant in Christ BY holding on to the end. Rather, holding on to the end is proof that you were a member of the household, and a participant in Christ all along.

It is not a lifelong test to make sure you don’t fail at some point along the way, at which point you’re disqualified. No!

Members of Jesus’s household make it to the end.

Verses 7 and 8: “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...” is not a warning to Christians that you might cease being a Christian at some point. It is a warning to unbelievers. It is a call to believe the Gospel message. When God calls you to believe in Christ for salvation, listen to Him, because there is no other way to be saved!

The reason the preacher of Hebrews includes it here in the argument is because he knows something every pastor knows about his congregation: that some of you in here think you are Christians, but you are not.

Some of you, hopefully not many, are here for the social and cultural aspects of church. You are here because you like the community. Maybe you enjoy the music and find it soothing or invigorating. The sermons are sometimes inspirational, mostly they are boring. You are here because of a cultural impulse that “going to church is the right thing to do, and this church is fine, so I’ll go here...”—but you are not here because you worship Christ and are convinced that He is the creator of the universe and the savior of mankind, and your only hope in life and death.

And this is why the author of Hebrews says “watch out”! He is speaking to those of you here who are not Christians.

WATCH OUT!

“3:12 **Watch out**, brothers and sisters, so that there won’t be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”

Watch out, why? Because the eternal consequences are serious! You will never enter God’s rest. You will suffer an eternity of separation from your creator. An eternity of torment in hell. Watch out! Fix your eyes on Jesus! Think carefully about Jesus! He is who He says He is and did what He said he did for you on the cross, paying all the debt for your sin, buying your soul back from slavery to sin and death, making a way for you to enter into a new eternal life with him forever!

Does “an evil and unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God...” describe any of you here this morning? Watch out!

Are any of you here this morning *worried* that this might describe you? I have good news for you: the preacher of Hebrews gives us the antidote to the problem.

ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER DAILY

Watch out, AND encourage one another daily, as long as it’s called today.

That is how we are supposed to respond to this warning that there might be in some of us an evil and unbelieving heart, we are to encourage one-another with the truth about Jesus Christ. With the Gospel message. *We are to encourage one another to keep our minds fixed on Jesus.* It is the cure to the unbeliever’s evil heart, *and* it is the antidote for the anxious Christian’s fear about the state of their soul.

Brothers and sisters, and friends who are not yet brothers and sisters, think deeply about Jesus with me. Let’s just think about what Hebrews has already told us...

He is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature... He sustains all things by his powerful word... He made purification for sins... He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high... He tasted death for everyone— and so is crowned with glory and honor He is the pioneer of our salvation... And He is not ashamed to call you brothers and sisters.

Fix your eyes on him. Hear His call to you to trust Him. And when He calls Do not ignore him.