

December 27, 2009 by Steve Brandon



Don't Harden Your Hearts

Hebrews 3:7-11

1. The Context (verse 7).
2. The Circumstances (verses 8-9).
3. The Consequences (verses 10-11).

About two years ago, construction crews were working on the bridge on Newburg road which crosses I-90, which is about a mile from here. On February 18th, 2008, the crews began the process of taking down the bridge. Before doing so, they posted signs and barricades in the middle of the road that said, "Bridge Out." Over the next several days, the city of Cherry Valley posted police officers nearby the construction site. The officers never saw a vehicle approach the barricades to the point where they had to turn around. Nor, had they ever seen any car proceed beyond the signs.

Joelle McGinnis of the Illinois Tollway Authority, said, "The barricades and signs are compliant and may have exceeded some of our standards." She even noted that a secondary set of barricades already extended across the road and shoulder. Well, ten days after these barricades and signs were posted (February 28th, 2009), Matthew Peterson was heading east on Newburg road at 6:20 p.m. From the tire tracks in the snow, it was obvious that Peterson ignored the barricades and the signs and drove right around them, heading straight for the bridge that had been taken down 10 days before. He proceeded to drive his Cadillac off the 15-foot-high bridge, striking the back end of a semi trailer's flatbed before landing on top of a Nissan sedan driven by Mary Brown, as she and her daughter drove down I-90.

Mary Brown sustained serious injuries in the accident and was trapped in her vehicle. Rescuers had to cut her from the wreckage before being flown to Saint Anthony Medical Center where she was treated for her injuries. By God's grace, her 12 year old daughter, who was riding with her was unharmed. What would cause Matthew Peterson to act in this way? To ignore the signs in the road? He was charged with DUI. [\[1\]](#)

Just as Matthew Peterson was driving under the influence, there are many in this life who live under the influence as well. They live under the influence of their sin. Therefore, they sleep through life, ignoring the warning signs that God has placed in our paths. And the sad news is that they are headed for destruction.

Douglas Wilson gives us a good illustration of life in his little book entitled, *Persuasions*. He begins this book by setting up the allegory of the book. He writes, ...

There was only one Road in that region, but like all roads, it ran in two directions. In one direction, it ran eastwards up a gradual incline, and ended at the City. In the other, the end of the Road was the Abyss. In some places, the two destinations were obvious; in others, where the Road wound down through some canyons in the badlands, the truth was less obvious. Still it was impossible for anyone to travel for any length of time on this Road without coming to some realization of his basic direction. Nevertheless, those who were headed to the Abyss were also headed downhill, and preferred that to the strenuous alternative. There were many who therefore chose to ignore the unpleasant truth. The Master of the City had posted road signs warning of the danger, but road signs could be ignored as well. The Master therefore instructed his servants, who were on their way to his City, to do their best to persuade these travelers to reverse direction. [\[2\]](#)

The rest of the book is spent in conversations with those who are headed down the road to destruction, ignoring the warning signs along the way. The people walking down the road are all of various sorts. There was a hedonist, a feminist, and an agnostic. There were those having difficulty in marriage, and one who believed in evolution. There was a new ager, a catholic, a liberal, and a feminist. Though the people all were following different ideologies, the message to them was the same: Think about where you are headed. It makes no sense where you are going. Turn around and go the other way. Heed the warnings posted along the road. Heed the warnings being sounded by the evangelist.

In my message to you this morning, we are going to look at one of the warning signs that God has posted along the road. And I want to take you to look at the warning, that you might heed it. My prayer for you is that you won't ignore the sign, that you won't proceed past the barricades, that you won't drive over the road where the bridge used to be, injuring yourself and others in the process. My prayer for you is that you won't live under the influence of your sin. But, rather, that you would heed the warnings that God has posted along the way, that you would be walking the right way in your life.

If you haven't done so already, I invite you to open your Bibles to the third chapter of the book of Hebrews. As we continue in our exposition of the book, we have arrived at chapter 3, verse 7, which begins the second of five warning passages in the book of Hebrews. We saw the first one in chapter 2, verses 1-4. The warning there was, "Don't drift." Remember, life is not a lake. It is a river, which draws us all to drift downstream. God calls us to swim against the tide - upstream - not ignoring the great salvation that He has provided for us. The world, the flesh, and the devil will seek to pull you away. So, look at your prize, and swim against the tide.

Today, the warning is this: "Don't harden your hearts." And, that is the title of my message this morning. It comes straight from our text, which I want to read for you. As we read, I would like for you to look for the single command in these words.

Hebrews 3:7-11

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways'; as I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

The command comes there in verse 8, "Do not harden your hearts." Everything surrounding this command is mere support to this command by way of explanation, illustration or persuasion.

How appropriate is this message for this Sunday! Here it is, the Sunday before the New Year, when we all think about what the next year will bring. It's a time for resolutions to be made. It's a time for turning over a new leaf. You may have all sorts of ambitions for 2010. As you think about your walk with the Lord, what sort of ambitions do you have for this year? Are you going to read through the Bible this year? Men, will this be the year that you begin conducting family worship in your home? Women, will this be the year that draws you closer to the Lord than ever before? Children, will this be the year that you put away your childish ways and follow the Lord with your whole heart? How about praying this prayer every day, "O Lord, give me a soft heart, that I might follow you in all my ways this year?"

Let's dig in to the text. For those of you who like outlines, here's my first point, ...

1. The Context (verse 7).

The first thing that we notice in these words is the connection with the previous section of Scripture. It comes in the word, "Therefore." These words are a conclusion drawn from the previous section of Scripture.

On one level, these words tie back to the first six verses in this chapter, in which the writer demonstrated that Jesus is better than Moses. The key verse is coming in verse 3, "For [Jesus] has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house." And because Jesus is better than Moses, don't harden your hearts toward Him. Jesus is so much better than the law. Jesus is so much better than the sacrifices. Jesus is so much better than the feasts and the festivals. So, don't harden your hearts away from Jesus and back to the law! Keep your heart soft and tender toward Jesus.

But, on another level, these words tie us back to all that was said in chapters 1 and 2. Jesus is better than the prophets. Jesus is better than angels. He is the best thing going, so don't get distracted by anything else as if it were better than Jesus. Don't look to anyone (or anything) else for your standing before God. He is our only hope. And so, therefore, don't harden your hearts.

The warning for us this morning, is a divine warning. This is serious stuff we are dealing with this morning! Verse 7 continues, "Just as the Holy Spirit says." See, it's one thing for a man to ignore the road signs posted on barricades and go over a bridge. But, it's another thing, altogether to ignore the signs posted by God on the way to life and face eternal consequences. And that's what we have here in verse 7.

Verse 7 says, "Just as the Holy Spirit says." The Holy Spirit, is the second person of the Trinity. He is co-equal with the Father and with the Son. He is the One who wrote these words.

"But, wait," you say, "doesn't chapter 4, verse 7 say that David wrote these words? Don't they come from Psalm 95? Didn't David write them down on parchment, somewhere in Jerusalem, many, many years ago?" Indeed, you are correct. But, such is the nature of the Scripture: dual-authorship. "Men moved by the Holy Spirit [wrote] from God" (2 Peter 1:21). Though David originally wrote these words - and the writer to the Hebrews quoted him - they were ultimately from the mind of God. And, as a result, they have all the force of the words that come from the mouth of God, the supreme authority in the universe. We must pay attention to them this morning!

When your brother speaks to you, you pay attention. When your parents speak to you, you pay a bit more attention. When a police officer speaks to you, you pay even more attention. But, when God speaks, you stop listening to everybody else and listen. You listen, so that you might obey. And God says, "Do not harden your hearts."

And so, you say, "Well, what does it mean to harden your heart?" A bit later, we will look at Pharaoh, who is the classic illustration of one who had a hard heart. One clue we get comes down in verse 12. We get help, as the writer applies our text this morning, which we will look at next week. He says, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 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."

You see the same word, "hardened" coming up in verse 13. Its connection is with the deceitfulness of sin. A hard heart is one that has been so deceived by sin that it is no longer sensitive to its snare. You see the word "heart" coming in verse 12. Words like "evil" and "unbelieving" define what a hard heart is. A hard heart is an evil heart. A hard heart is an unbelieving heart. A hard heart is a sinful heart. Bottom line is this: a hardened heart is longer soft and sensitive to the ways of God. Instead, a hard heart stands firm to resist the Word of God, however it comes.

At this point, I have to ask you: What's your heart like? Do you have a soft heart? Or, do you have a hard heart? When you hear or read something in the Scripture, does your heart cry out to God, "Oh, God, help me to obey!"? Or, do you try to find a way out of your obedience? Or, do you just not care altogether? The call here is have a soft and compliant heart before God that you might believe God and that you might obey God.

A soft heart doesn't wait to obey. It doesn't wait until an opportune time, when obedience might be easy. No, the call here is to submit your hearts to Him now. Look at how the quote from Psalm 95 begins: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." This is a call to action now. It's not a call to wait. It's not a call to act soon, because soon never comes. No, it's a call to action now. It's a call to keep your hearts from being hard.

Now, there's a condition to this command. He says in verse 7, "Today if you hear His voice." I can tell you now, you are hearing His voice today. I am speaking for God! I'm not any different than you. I didn't receive any special revelation this week. But, this is God's Word. As I open it up, God is speaking to you today!

You say, "But, these words were written 2,000 years ago to a Jewish audience." How can we know that they are still applicable to us today? Well, think about it. They were actually written in 1000 B.C. That's three thousand years ago. When David wrote, "Today, if you hear His voice, don't harden your hearts" he was writing to Jewish people, who lived long before Christ came. And yet, 1,000 years later, near the time of Christ, the writer to the Hebrews writes the same thing, "Today, if you hear His voice, don't harden your hearts." And I would contend that these words are as true for us today as they were in David's time and as they were shortly after the days of Christ.

God calls all of us to keep soft hearts before Him. He calls us to have tender hearts. He calls us to hear God's word and heed it today. Now, we know that God, in His sovereignty, is patient. His patience is often the catalyst for our repentance. Paul wrote in Romans 2:4, "It is the kindness of God that leads you to repentance?" But, there are times when the kindness and patience of God do not end in repentance. Revelation 2:21 says, "I gave [Jezebel] time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality." For those who don't repent, and for those who continue in the hardness of their hearts, God will punish them.

This is the point of verses 10 and 11, "Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways;' as I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

Those who go astray in their hearts, those who don't know the ways of God, will face the anger of God. They will face the wrath of God. But, I get ahead of myself. Let's turn our attention now to verses 8 and 9. We have seen the context. I'm calling these verses, ...

2. The Circumstances (verses 8-9).

In other words, I am speaking about the historical circumstances behind the warning. They are found in verses 8 and 9, ...

Hebrews 3:8-9

Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw my works for forty years.

There was a time when the Israelites provoked God. There was a time when the Israelites tested God. I want you to notice the little word, "as." It occurs twice in verse 8, each time referring to the same thing. "Don't harden your hearts" as the Israelites did. There is a way in which they hardened their hearts that we ought to know about, not to imitate their example, but to avoid it.

Now, these words are referring to a very specific moment in Israel's history. You can see this best if you turn to Psalm 95. So, turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 95. Fortunately, the verses in Psalm 95 correspond exactly with the verses in Hebrews 3. In other words, verse 7 of Hebrews 3 is verse 7 of Psalm 95. Hebrews 3:8 is verse Psalm 95:8, and so on. So, it makes it easy for us this morning.

Look once again at verse 8, "Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness." The word, "Meribah" means "strife." The word, "Massah" means "temptation." "Meribah" and "Massah" were names that Moses gave to specific events in the life of Israel, which are recorded in Exodus, chapter 17. It would be very helpful for us this morning if we turn in our Bibles back to Exodus 17. Now, in order to understand the reality of Exodus 17, we really need to understand what just took place in Israel's history, leading up to this moment in time.

Some 600 years before this time, God had made a covenant with Abraham to make a great nation out of him. They had grown to be a great nation with as many as a million people. But, the people of Israel were enslaved in Egypt. And so, they cried out to the Lord for help because of their bondage (Ex. 2:23). "God heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant, ... and God took notice of them" (Ex. 2:24-25). He appeared to Moses in the burning bush and promised to deliver Israel through him. And so, Moses came to Pharaoh and requested that the Israelites be allowed to go and serve the Lord in the wilderness (Ex. 7:16). When Pharaoh refused, Moses warned Pharaoh, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood" (Ex. 7:17). It happened exactly as Moses said that it would.

Again, Moses came to Pharaoh and brought a message from the LORD, "Let my people go, that they may serve Me. But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite you whole territory with frogs" (Ex. 8:1-2). When Pharaoh refused, it came to pass, exactly as the LORD had foretold it would (Ex. 8:6). When Pharaoh requested that the frogs be removed from the land, they were removed on the next day, exactly as Pharaoh had requested (Ex. 8:10). Yet, still, his heart was hard (Ex. 8:15).

So the LORD sent gnats all throughout the land (Ex. 8:16-19). Again, Pharaoh's heart was hard. Then Moses again went to Pharaoh and told him that the LORD would send swarms of flies on the Egyptians, but not on the Hebrew people (Ex. 8:20-24). And it was so, exactly as the LORD had said.. The flies were so bad that Pharaoh pledged to let the Israelites go and worship in the wilderness (Ex. 8:25, 28). But, when the swarms of flies were removed from Egypt, Pharaoh again hardened his heart (Ex. 8:32). Then, Moses again came into Pharaoh's presence, requesting that he let the people go (Ex. 9:1). If not, Moses said, that the next day pestilence would come upon the livestock on Egypt, but not upon the livestock in Goshen, where the Israelites lived (Ex. 9:4). It happened exactly as Moses had said, but Pharaoh's heart was still hard, "and he did not let the people go" (Ex. 9:7).

And then came the plague of boils, which broke out on all of the Egyptians (Ex. 9:8-12). God had foretold it, and it came to pass. And yet, Pharaoh's heart was still hard (Ex. 9:12).

Moses then came again and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, 'if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth.'" (Ex. 9:15). And that is the point of the plagues: God's power is far beyond our power. We are at His disposal. This time, Moses told Pharaoh that the LORD was soon to send "a very heavy hail" upon Egypt (Ex. 9:18). Pharaoh was told that the hail would come tomorrow, so there would be time to warn the Egyptians to stay inside (Ex. 9:19-21). In the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, he didn't tell the servants. But, when it came to pass exactly as foretold, Pharaoh confessed his sin and pleaded for the hail to stop. Moses said, "As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease and there will be hail no longer that you may know that the earth is the LORD's." (Ex. 9:29). But, when the hail stopped, Pharaoh's heart was hardened once again.

Then came the locusts in much the same way. Moses and Aaron brought a message from the LORD, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory'" (Ex. 10:4). The locusts came upon the land of Egypt and covered the surface of the whole land and ate every plant just as had been foretold (Ex. 10:14-15). Again, Pharaoh pleaded that the locusts be removed. And so, at the request of Moses, a wind came and drove the locusts into the Red Sea. Obviously, God was in sovereign control. But, again, Pharaoh did not let the sons of Israel go. And so, Moses stretched out his hand and brought darkness upon the land (Ex. 10:22), but not in Goshen, where it was still light for the sons of Israel (Ex. 10:22). Again, Pharaoh was distressed and promised to let the sons of Israel go (Ex. 10:24). But, again, his heart was hardened and he didn't let them go (Ex. 10:27).

And then, the last of the plagues came with the death of the firstborn in the land of Egypt. About midnight, the Angel of the LORD went throughout all Egypt and killed the firstborn, of Pharaoh, and of the slave girl, and of all the cattle (Ex. 11:4-5). It was too much for Pharaoh to take. That night, he said to Moses and Aaron, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said. Take both your flock and your herds, as you have said, and go and bless me also" (Ex. 12:31-32). And so the people of Israel left, clearly knowing that it was God's sovereign hand that had delivered them! They saw the plagues. They saw the way that they started and stopped.

We pick up the story in Exodus 14. Look at verse 5, "When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people and they said, 'What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?'" And so, they proceeded to pursue Israel, with the goal of bringing them back into the land, under slavery once again. They were under no delusion about their salvation. It came from the mighty hand of God. Look down in verse 10, ...

Exodus 14:10-12

As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? "Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

You have to catch this. There was a reason why I went through all of the ten plagues, one by one. I wanted you to feel the overwhelming sovereignty of God. He brought the plagues at His command. He took them away at His command. There is nothing outside of His control. It was by God's design that the people of Israel had left Egypt, and it was by design that Pharaoh pursued them. In verse 4, God said, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."

How should Israel have responded? The people of Israel saw the plagues for themselves. They should have seen the wonders of God and trusted in Him to deliver them. But, they caught the disease that Pharaoh had. They hardened their hearts and complained to Moses. The story continues, ...

Exodus 14:13-14

But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. "The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent." Moses stretched out his hand over the sea (Ex. 14:16). The sea divided, giving the sons of Israel a dry walkway (Ex. 14:16). When the Egyptians followed, they were drowned (Ex. 14:26-29).

Indeed, God's salvation was amazing. The Israelites saw it first hand! "See the salvation of the LORD!" (Ex. 14:13) Chapter 15 finds the sons of Israel rejoicing at the salvation of God. But, soon after found them grumbling again at Moses. Let's pick up the story in verse 22, ...

Exodus 15:22-24

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah. So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

At this point, the people of Israel were being tested. How should they have responded? "O great God, you have brought us thus far, we anticipate your salvation. What shall we drink?" Instead, they grumbled. In verse 25, we see Moses crying out to the Lord, "and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet." The saga continues in chapter 16, ...

Exodus 16:1-3

Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Think about what was taking place here. These people had seen the miraculous working of God in the 10 plagues. They had witnessed His salvation through the Red Sea. They had witnessed the bitter water being made sweet. And how do they respond? "Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron." Instead, they should have trusted in the LORD to provide. The Manna in the wilderness was totally consistent with God's dealings with Israel up to this point. But, Israel had a hard heart!

And now, we get to chapter 17, in which Meribah and Massah are mentioned, ...

Exodus 17:1-3

Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

Again, we see the same pattern. God had wondrously provided for Israel in miraculous ways. By the miracles of the plagues, He led them out of Egypt. He parted the Red Sea. He made the bitter water sweet. He provided them with Manna in the wilderness. And at this point, they think that the LORD has deserted them? They turn on Moses and claim that he brought them into the wilderness to kill them with thirst? Why did they say such things? They had a hard heart. Instead of trusting the LORD, they were complaining. The account continues in verse 4, ...

Exodus 17:4-7

So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

This is the reference in Psalm 95. This is the reference in Hebrews 3. They had witnessed unbelievable displays of God's power in route to their salvation from slavery, and they hardened their hearts and turned their backs on God. Now, we might say, "Well, to be sure, I wouldn't do that!" I'm not so sure. How easy is it to complain.

Our family gathered together on Christmas Eve. All four of my siblings and their spouses and their children. We were pushing 40 people. After dinner, we gathered in the living room, and all sat around the tree, prepared to open some presents. After singing a few hymns, we then had about an hour and a half of testimonies of God's working in our lives this past year. It was a super-encouraging time.

One of the testimonies was given by my sister, who has taken some foster children into their home. Currently, they have a 4 year old girl, who they have under legal guardianship. She was telling of how she was preparing dinner one evening, and this little girl came up to her and said, "Mommy, can I have something to eat?" My sister said, "No. I'm making dinner. We are eating soon." To which this little girl spoke out, "You're selfish! You never share anything with me." And my sister was stunned. She didn't say anything, but, she was thinking to herself, "What are you talking about? Not sharing anything with you? We have shared everything with you. You have come into our house with nothing. We have fed you. We have provided shelter for you. We have provided clothes for you. We have given our time to you. We have prayed for you. What do you mean we haven't shared anything with you."

And then, my sister told us of how she was pierced in the heart of how easily she can complain to the LORD, when God has taken her in and given her everything. 1 Corinthians 4:7 says, "What do you have that you did not receive?" It's a good lesson for us this morning regarding complaining. It's a good lesson on turning our backs on God.

Let's go back to the book of Hebrews, chapter 3. It's the same deal with those in the first century. To be sure, they hadn't seen the great miraculous workings of God like those in the days of Moses. But, they had seen something better. They had seen the coming of the Messiah.

Jesus is better than anything that they had ever experienced before. All of the prophecies of the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus. He lived among the people as a perfect man. We have seen how much better Jesus is than the angels. We have seen how much better Jesus is than Moses, and then, to turn back to those things, it to turn against God and trust in something else. Really, it's inconceivable. We can look back at the Israelites and see things so clearly! But can we see things clearly today? We have the best before us, in Jesus. Why would we want anything else?

The salvation we have isn't merely an earthly salvation from slavery! No, our salvation is eternal salvation from our sin and all of its consequences. Why would you want anything else? Anything else is a sign of a hard heart.

The warning in Hebrews 12 says it this way, "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven" (12:25). We won't escape.

If you look there in verse 9, we see that they didn't escape. We read there that they "saw my works for forty years." That's a reference to the fact that Israel wandered for 40 years in the wilderness for their unbelief, which leads us to our final point, ...

3. The Consequences (verses 10-11).

This comes in verses 10 and 11, ...

Hebrews 3:10-11

"Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways;' as I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

What will be said of us and our generation? What will be said of Rock Valley Bible Church? Will it be said that God is angry at us? Will it be said that we always go astray? Will it be said that we don't know his ways?

The ways of God are clear. He has given to us a son, Jesus Christ, the perfect sacrifice. We merely look to Him and are saved from all of our sin. We face no condemnation in Him. In Him we are made complete.

God calls us to a life of faith and following Him, who has done so much for us. If we turn our back on that, God will not be pleased with us. His anger will be upon us. Because, in Jesus Christ, we have a shield that perfectly deflects God's anger at our sin - Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation in His blood. If we set Him aside, we will receive the anger of God upon our lives. We will not know His rest (verse 11), because we have spurned the greatest gift that God has ever given to us!

O, church family. Don't harden your hearts. Don't ignore this warning sign and go over the bridge. You will only hurt yourself and others in the process!

Here's the good news: God gives the soft heart. Ezekiel 36:26 says, "I will give you a new heart and will put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." If you see the warning sign today on the road, if you hear the warning voice of God today, then pray for God to give you a soft heart. Pray every day in 2010 for God to soften your heart!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 27, 2009 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] You can read about it here: <http://www.rrstar.com/cherryvalley/x1300272115>.

[2] Douglas Wilson, *Persuasions*, p. 7.