

# Hebrews 3 “Hard Hearts, Faithful Friends, Perfect Priest”

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[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.! Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

There was once a congregation of God's people that saw the power and the glory of God at work among them marvelously.

They sang praises to His greatness. They regularly gathered together and heard His law read to them. They were led by men called by God.

They talked often of God's truth. They received God's provision enough to make budget 40 years in a row.

It was like manna falling from heaven or something. And yet, neither the leader nor most of the people made it where God was taking them.

[ 1 : 05 ] They started out fast with God, excited. But they didn't finish well. Sometimes churches and Christians start out with a bang, like a firecracker, looking and sounding so good, but only to fade just as impressively and quickly.

And I think this is a particular concern in a culture where our attention spans are shrinking. Flashy experiences are often needed to keep our commitment to anything or anyone.

We get bored, don't we? Dissatisfied very quickly. I bet every one of us has at home some project that we've started. Maybe we got really close, but we never quite finished.

The writer to the Hebrews, who has been pointing us to the greatness of Jesus over and over, he wants to ensure the churches that he's writing to endure, persevere, finish as well as they started with God, even when life is tough.

And so, in chapter 3, he's going to do two things. He's going to compare Jesus and Moses, and then he's going to give God's people a warning from their history, the history of God's people in the Exodus generation that I just recounted for us a little bit.

[ 2 : 45 ] Warning, he says. This could happen to you, to y'all, to us. Listen as I read to what he's warning against.

Listen for that. And to how he tells us to guard against it. Hebrews chapter 3. The whole thing.

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.

For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

Now, Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son, and we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting and our hope.

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 40 years.

[ 4 : 14 ] 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 sin's deceitfulness.

For we 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 it that he was provoked for 40 years? Was it not 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.

[ 5 : 25 ] Thus far, God's holy word. Let's pray. God, these are challenging words for our hearts.

They are your words. And so, by Holy Spirit, as you say here, would you speak to us? Would you give us ears to hear?

Would you soften our hearts? In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. It might be a compliment to be told that you have rock-hard abs or biceps.

I wouldn't know, but I think it would be. But you don't want to hear the doctor say, you have a hard heart. That is a problem physically.

And as this passage says, spiritually. The preacher here is not telling the people that they have hard hearts, but he is warning them about the danger of that diagnosis, showing them that it's a problem that no one plans to have.

[ 6 : 41 ] I'm going to have a hard heart. No. Yet it still happens. So beware. That spiritual sickness, hard heartedness, is mentioned several times in this passage.

So I want us to see what that dangerous condition involves, and then where it leads, and how to prevent it.

First, we'll start with what a hard-hearted diagnosis involves. It starts with the hardening being against God.

Notice the writer to the Hebrews turns to Psalm 95. That's where this big quotation is from, starting at verse 7. That's a psalm that these Jewish Christians he's writing to would have been very familiar with.

They would have heard it nearly every week of their lives as they came to Sabbath worship. We began our service with it this morning. You know, come, let us worship and bow down.

[ 7 : 44 ] Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. It's a reminder of the God that we worship. And then there's a command. Today, over and over.

Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts. Don't put him to the test. Our hearts go astray when they get distant from God's ways.

Verse 10. We start to listen to man's voices telling us where life is found rather than God's. Like the Israelites that we read about earlier, right?

Quarreling about the water. Grumbling about their leaders. We're not even sure anymore that God is really among us.

Is he really here? Can we really trust him? We so need that regular reminder, don't we? See, I marched out of Egypt with God, but now I'm thinking Egypt might have been better.

[ 8 : 48 ] Amazing, right? These people watched the plagues. They survived the Passover. They walked through the Red Sea on dry ground.

And they're wondering now about whether God or Pharaoh would be a better provider for them. Wow. Y'all, that's the deceitfulness of sin.

That ought to get our attention. Verse 13 says, our hearts can be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

They can become evil, unbelieving hearts. Not because we set out to be evil and do lots of bad stuff. But because sin deceives us.

See, sin tells us what? Life is to be found somewhere else apart from God. Maybe not even far away. Maybe just right here to the side a little bit. And you get used to going to that place for life.

[ 9 : 57 ] It becomes normal and natural and your heart gets hard toward God. It doesn't look to Him for life anymore. Let me just give you some examples of the deceitfulness of sin.

There are thousands. Just imagine you're really wanting to be friends with this girl at youth group. But she keeps making fun of this other girl.

Talking bad about her and so, but you really want to be her friend, so you laugh along. Sometimes you even chime in with a little slight at the other girl. So that the cool girl likes being with you.

And you're thinking, you know, no one's hurt. What's happened? I'm just getting a friend. But sin deceived you. You're actually destroying the possibility of safe friendship, aren't you? Of real gospel community. You'll never feel safe with that cool girl if you're laughing at others. Because how do you know that they're not laughing at you when you're not there?

[11:05] Frustrated with the intimacy in your own marriage? You turn to digital images on your screens. You tell yourself at first things like, I deserve this.

I'm not hurting anyone. In fact, I'm avoiding arguments with my spouse. But sin deceived you. You're actually misusing another image bearer of God.

And you're avoiding the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness and true love in your marriage. You're taking a cheap substitute that won't actually love you.

You won't experience that. And soon you find you're both drifting from God and from one another. Maybe you're increasingly angry with other Christians for how they're responding to current events. Just hypothetically. You're so frustrated with how they're not loving people. They're not speaking out, but they're silently compromising. You're so angry that instead of growing together and leaning into that, you disconnect from church entirely.

[12:18] I don't need them. I've got Jesus. And they don't need me. But sin deceived you. You're actually abandoning brothers and sisters in need in your own church family while thinking you're helping those who are in need because you're not there with them where Jesus puts you.

and you're setting yourself up in your own mind as the only one who knows what's best. You're isolating. That's not what Jesus made you for. See, sin deceives us.

It promises us life apart from God, apart from His ways. I know better about my life, right? Who could know as well as I do what I need?

And we start to ignore the conviction of sin the preaching of God's word, the brother or sister who wants to challenge us because our heart has grown hard.

I mean, maybe we're not the worst guy in the world. We feel pretty decent about ourselves, but that's the problem. We've gotten satisfied with life on our own. Sin.

[13:33] Malcolm Muggeridge wrote about this deceptive settling in his autobiography. The saddest thing to me in looking back on my life has been to recall not so much the wickedness I have been involved in, the cruel and selfish and egotistic things I have done, the hurt I have inflicted on those I loved, although all that's painful enough.

What hurts most is the preference I have so often shown for what is inferior, tenth rate, when the first rate was there for the having.

Like a man who goes shopping and comes back with cardboard shoes when he might have had leather, with dried fruit when he might have had fresh, with processed cheese when he might have had cheddar, with paper flowers when the primroses were out.

God was there. He said, life, joy, rest, peace, hope, love, but I thought I'd found a better way.

The end of that road is getting hardened in unbelief. It's mentioned twice here the evil, unbelieving heart there in verse 12.

[14:55] That means it doesn't keep its singular focus on trust and hope in God. And then in verse 19, at the end of the day, the hard heart just doesn't believe in God anymore.

A settled coldness and distance from God, from His Word, from His people, even when you're around them quite often. You're just impervious to them.

You're shut off from them. You've slowly rubbed a callous on your heart, even in church, and you've kept rubbing it so you no longer feel conviction.

You no longer feel a longing. You no longer feel anything. Listen, it's possible to hear and see God and still rebel in unbelief.

To sit among His people and still reject His lordship in your life, His love for you to feel nothing.

[16:05] You started so well with God, but then sin deceived and your heart began to harden. It's a serious diagnosis.

How serious is spiritual hard-heartedness? What's the prognosis for you if it takes you down? Take care. Watch out.

Lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. No one wants that. Away from the God who made you to be with Him. Certainly, that wouldn't be me, right? Look where I am.

I'm sitting in church. I've been in church my whole life. I know more theology than my pastor. I've led the fundraising campaign. We got that golden calf up in no time.

[ 17 : 04 ] Listen to the pastor's heart concerned for his people. Who was it that finished so poorly back then in the wilderness?

Stuck in the wilderness 40 years, buried there. It was a whole generation, he says, of people who followed Moses' footsteps out of Egypt and across the Red Sea.

They started so fast with God, it seemed. No one had ever seen the greatness of God the way they had. They are the ones who sinned, died in the wilderness, were disobedient.

They didn't really believe. They showed it when God said, here, come in and take this land that I'm giving you. And they said, yeah, but there's giants.

How? How? You know, Egypt might have been better than that. We know better than Yahweh what is best for us.

[ 18 : 12 ] Unbelief. Powerful, painful unbelief. The prognosis for the hard heart is it's unable to enter God's rest.

Makes sense, doesn't it? If your heart is hardened against God looking for life somewhere else and anything else that you can find, you can't enjoy the rest that God offers only in Himself.

There's no rest to relieve you. No heaven to look forward to. No promises to count on. No love to revel in.

No peace to calm you. No God to hold you. Now that's dark, right?

I mean, not a lot of cheer and chuckles from me today. Neither the pastor to the Hebrews nor this pastor wants to talk about that potential diagnosis and prognosis without telling you how to avoid it.

[ 19 : 21 ] What's the prescription? Are you ready for that? What do I do? I don't want to end up there. What's the prescription to prevent hard heartedness? Notice, good news, he's writing to those who haven't hardened yet, at least not beyond help or hope.

He's warning them and he's encouraging them as a community. If you're hearing me, it's not too late. To keep your heart soft, first pill to take daily.

Speak to one another's hearts. I want to look more closely at verses 12 and 13. take care, brothers and sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God.

But, instead of falling away from the living God with an unbelieving heart, what? What? 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.

You notice there how many hearts you're supposed to be watching carefully, taking care, that you don't, how many of them? Is it just one? Is it just your own that you're responsible for?

[ 20 : 42 ] It's not, is it? It's all your brothers and sisters. Take care, lest in any of you so that none of you, you need to be watching out for all of them.

It is your job to make sure the deceitfulness of sin does not harden you or anyone else in your family. Oh, pastor, I just wanted to take my pill at home every day and just carry on with my life.

Nope, not an option. Exhort one another every day. It's that beautiful word parakaleo translated, you'll know it as counsel or encourage, exhort, help, comfort.

Literally, it means call alongside. It means come beside a brother or sister and yell at them in love. like a heart massage. Soften their hearts to God. Don't let sin deceive them and harden them.

[ 21 : 52 ] See, it's a lot more than just hang out with one another. You know, play pickleball, read a book, shoot the breeze, tell jokes. No, speak to one another's hearts.

What's going on there? In context, this is saying the practical, personal remedy that God gives against the deceitfulness of sin in your heart is brothers and sisters who make the truth of Jesus seem more beautiful than the lies of sin.

That's God's remedy. That's the pill. Brothers and sisters who make the truth of Jesus seem more beautiful to you than the lies of sin. Sometimes that means calling you out on the lies of sin they see you believing.

Sometimes that will mean sharing their own struggles and praying together. Sometimes that will mean coming alongside you and yelling the wonder and the worth of Jesus so loudly in your ear that it drowns out anything else that you may be listening to.

I have so many of those in my life. I hope you do. So many. I'm so thankful. I think that God knew that I was going to need so much help to see the deceitfulness of my sin to see the worth of my

Savior.

[ 23 : 12 ] He's given me so many many of you. I'll come back to that. Speak to one another. Let me just point out briefly no matter how spiritual you are this is part of the Bible that you can't obey.

on your own by yourself. Even if you and God are having really great quiet times even if you have already read the entire Bible reading plan for the year and prayed all of the prayers in the booklets you can't do this.

You actually have to have a grace group whether you call it that or not. You need other people. Listen, you are in rebellion against God disobedience to His Word if you aren't actively seeking people to speak into your heart while you speak into theirs.

It's that serious. How often do we need to take this pill? Every day as long as it is called today until Jesus returns you never stop needing this.

This is not some legalistic 24 hour period where you must speak to one another or else. Listen, if you miss the preventive medication once you're probably okay that night but never stop taking it regularly, right?

[ 24 : 39 ] That's the warning. Hardness will begin to develop. You know one of the things that means? It means that I am not able to do this for you.

A sermon on Sunday and a quirky video on Wednesday that you skip over to remind you about the worth of Jesus that's not enough.

You need to find your people. Find a grace group. Ask someone to yell alongside you. Offer to yell alongside them.

Blame it on me if you need to if it's awkward. Blame it on Hebrews. But do it. I want to urge you to do it today. This afternoon.

Today in the words of Hebrews reach out to at least one person. Can I just challenge each of you to do that? Reach out to one person or one group at a minimum and just say you do this for me.

[ 25 : 44 ] Thank you. Please don't stop. or I so need you to do this for me. Would you please would you please do this for me?

Make a note somewhere right now so that you do it this afternoon that you reach out and say brother sister let me be your shelter. Let me shine light into your life.

Some of you are texting right now that's not what I said. God sees you this afternoon do that. That's a big part of the prescription here.

Speak to one another. But it's not just to be talkative. Remember it's to our hearts. So what is it that we're saying?

What are we speaking about? We speak to one another so that we listen ultimately to God's voice. That's the one we need to hear right? Twice the preacher quotes that line from Psalm 95.

[ 26 : 51 ] He's really focused on that first part. Today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts. Stay soft. Stay warm to what God says.

Even if it challenges you especially if it challenges you keep sitting under God's word. You don't know what to say to your friend when you reach out, when you speak to them one day.

Share something you read in your Bible reading. Even copy and paste it. Anything that helped you see your need for Jesus and his graciously meeting your need.

Just share it with them. Look at verse seven. As the Holy Spirit says, interesting way to quote scripture isn't it?

As the Holy Spirit says, God speaks to us in his word. Doesn't he? Notice just for a minute that this really neat dynamic that's going on.

[ 27 : 55 ] This is God the Holy Spirit speaking in Psalm 95 to speak to God's people then about something that happened several hundred years before that they need to heed the warning of and learn from.

You see what's happening there? Learn from them the Holy Spirit says. And then the writer to the Hebrews takes Psalm 95 several hundred years after that and says, look back to that.

God's still speaking. Listen again to him. And here we are now gathered several hundred years later looking back to the writer writing to the Hebrews and saying, listen to what he says.

God is speaking. The Holy Spirit speaks to you today and says, don't miss this. If you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. God still speaks by his spirit through his word.

You can count on it. Today, today, if you hear his voice, listen up. Don't turn away. Keep listening. So that ultimately you hold fast to Jesus.

[ 29 : 08 ] Did you remember that's where this whole passage started? Some of you were wondering if I was going to make it back to that. Verse 1. Consider Jesus.

Fix your thoughts on Jesus is what it means. He is the one that you most need to help you endure. See, the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness, who failed to finish well, they had a good leader, didn't they?

Moses was indeed the epitome of greatness for the Jews and sure enough, he was faithful to God. This is not ripping on Moses here. God sent Moses to deliver his message to his people and then to deliver his people from bondage.

He represented God to the people and then he represented the people to God when he pled for God to show mercy on them. What an amazing, incredible guy. But just like he did with the angels in chapter 2, the writer here is giving a warning saying, if the people following Moses fell away and missed out on something good, how much more will people following Jesus who fall away from him miss out on something good?

See, while Moses is a servant, he says, of God, Jesus is the son of God. Moses, you're outranked. While Moses is a part of God's house, Jesus builds the house.

[ 30 : 42 ] Moses, you're outdone. Jesus is the apostle of our confession, the one we affirm as sent by God from heaven to dwell with us.

The prophet like Moses, but even greater than Moses. Jesus is also the high priest of our confession, the one who represents us before God by making the ultimate sacrifice, right? So that no one in him, no one following Jesus, no one in his family ever fails to make it home. So glory to Jesus, right?

Glory and glory and more glory because he brings us home. See, we're really close to Jesus. We are his brothers and sisters, it says. Isn't that beautiful? That reminder to you right as he's warning you. We are in the second analogy, we are God's house, which is why every single brick, every one of us is needed.

[ 31 : 49 ] We must cling to one another, let no one fall away because God lives here. Wow, what an amazing thing we're a part of. And then he says, we share in Christ as long as we hold fast our confidence to the end.

Is that what he's saying? As long as our grip is strong enough, is that what will do it? No. He talks about our confidence in Jesus. Our boasting and our hope is Jesus.

He indeed enables us to endure and to finish what we started with him. Isn't this amazing that we're not actually on our own? We have a share, a stake in Christ, the enduring one.

We're in him. I want to show you as we close a clip from the 1992 Olympics.

I suspect many of you will have seen it. One of the great moments in Olympic history, British sprinter Derek Redmond was really fast. He ran away with his first heat in the 400 meters.

[ 33 : 00 ] This you're about to see is his semifinal heat and I'm going to commentate for us so I can make some points along the way. It's a little long. There's Redmond in lane five wearing blue.

You'll be able to tell who he is in just a minute. He separates from the pack but he starts really fast. He's looking good. He's there in the middle looking strong really, really fast.

A little faster than me. And then oh no. Oh. He tears his hamstring and he's down as the other racers kind of keep going and he just falls on the track and there they are headed to the finish line but he is all the way back and then he hobbles up and he starts limping his way around the track. Look at his face. Like the agony that he's feeling. You get a close up here in just a second. He can barely keep moving. All of a sudden somebody comes running down out of the stands.

Anybody know who that is? That's his dad. His dad gets by security, right? Nobody's stopping him. And he finds his son, puts his arm around him.

[ 34 : 23 ] Redmond later, you can keep watching, just listen to me. Redmond says what his dad was saying to him here. He said the first thing he said was, you're a champion. You've got nothing to prove.

You're a champion. He was telling him he didn't have to keep going. He said, I want to get to the finish line. His dad said, hey, okay. We started this together.

We're going to finish this together. He said, that's what he kept whispering in his ear. We're going to finish this together. You will notice that his dad has no interest, by the way, in anybody else helping. It's one of my favorite parts. He keeps brushing up.

Dude, we got this. Leave us alone. Get off the camera. All the way. All the way to the finish line.

You can't hear this because I turned the audio off, but as they cross the finish line here, there is a huge roar from the crowd like nobody else who won any race.

[ 35 : 25 ] Listen, God has challenged you and warned you pretty hard today. I feel that. The beauty of the word of God, of the gospel of Jesus, is that God is not standing far away doing that.

When you've fallen, when you're despairing, when you're not sure that you can finish the race and hold on, God has come down out of heaven, out of the stands, if you will, and he's put his arm around you and said, we started this together.

I made you. I chose you. I went to the cross for you. I rose from the grave for you. I'm with you now, and I'm coming back for you.

We started this together. We're going to finish this together. And that roar from the crowd, I think that's the brothers and sisters who are yelling alongside you.

They're yet one more reminder to lean on Jesus, to hold fast to him, the faithful savior. They're yelling so that Jesus can whisper in your ear right now.

[ 36 : 40 ] With his arm around you, he's saying, you don't have to figure it all out. You don't have to be the strong one. You don't have to have the strength to make it to the finish line.

You just trust me. Lean on me. I'll bring you home. We're going to finish this together.

Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts. Jesus, help us hear you. Even if you're whispering to us, especially if you're shouting in our pain, help us to know there's someone holding us, to whom we can hold fast in our weakness, cast our broken selves on, and be safe, and be helped, and be strengthened for however many days you have left for us here, and for an eternity that we look forward to with you.

Thank you for being our older brother, for coming to us, and making us a part of your family. Soften our hearts.

Holy Spirit, we need you to work. Our stony hearts are slow to relent, but Jesus, you're so beautiful, you're so wonderful, you're so good, you can make them soft, that we might trust you and walk with you even today.

[ 38 : 18 ] Do that work right now. Keep working on us and don't let us forget. We ask in your name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](https://yetanother sermon.host).