

Week 7: FORMED Series

Responding Today with Obedient Hearts

Hebrews 3:7-19

⁷ 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 wilderness,

⁹ where your ancestors tested and tried me,

though for forty years they saw what I did.

¹⁰ That is why I was angry with that generation;

I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray,

and they have not known my ways.'

¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger,

'They shall never enter my rest.' "

¹² See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 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. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. ¹⁵ As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear his voice,

do not harden your hearts

as you did in the rebellion."

¹⁶ Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? ¹⁸ 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.

Comments on the Text:

Hebrews 3:1-4:16 forms the first major block in which the preacher maintains an extended and varied exhortation. The first half of this exhortation (3:1-19) has two primary divisions. (1) Verses 1-6 draw a comparison between Moses' faithfulness as a servant and the filial faithfulness of Jesus. The author presents Jesus as the supreme example of faithfulness while building on his audience's respect for Moses, whom they revere as a great religious figure. (2) Verses 7-19 consist of a quotation of Psalm 95:7-11 and a commentary on that passage. In this section the author presents the people led out of Egypt by Moses as a paradigmatic picture of unfaithfulness. With chapter 3, therefore, the author aims to confront his hearers with a challenge to be faithful in their Christian commitment."¹

¹ George Guthrie, *Hebrews* (Zondervan Academic, 2009), pg 125.

"The author follows the affirmation that the community's status as God's "house" is conditional with the citation of Ps 95:7–11, which offers ancient Israel as the example of those who did not hold firm to its hope. The citation is another reminder that the God who has spoken in the past (1:1) now speaks to the church inasmuch as it begins with a call to hear God's voice (3:7) and concludes with God's oath to Israel (3:11). These were not, however, merely words for the ancient audience, for the author contemporizes this stern warning for the benefit of the wavering people who hear his voice. Beware, brothers (3:12a), indicates that the psalm's warning speaks to the church, and the "today" of the psalm (3:7) is the "today" of the church (3:13). The church, God's house (3:6), lives in continuity with Israel, and it also stands at the entrance to the promised land. Just as the author later presents his church as the successors of Israel in 11:39, he now instructs his community to hear God's voice, which once spoke to the ancestors. The psalm addresses the church as both warning and promise. The warning tells of the consequences of not listening to God's voice in 3:12–19, where unfaithfulness forms an inclusio that frames the exhortation. Although the author uses a variety of words in this midrash to describe Israel's failure—they rebelled (3:16), sinned (3:17), and disobeyed (3:18)—he summarizes their experience in the inclusio as unfaithfulness (cf. 4:2). He uses the unfaithfulness (3:19) of Israel as a warning against the church's unfaithfulness, indicating the tragic consequences of the church's failure to heed God's voice. He paints with a broad brush, leaving no place for exceptions in this dismal categorization of Israel."²

This week's sermon:

Brian brought out 3 things from the text:

1. To be encouraged that God speaks today – just as he did in the past.
2. When we hear His voice, we can either choose to obey or harden our hearts. Brian emphasised the author's use of "today"... highlighting that obedience is for today, not tomorrow or later. Delayed obedience is disobedience.
3. We are called to encourage one another daily – help others to persevere in their faith as they face trials and challenges.

Reflection Questions:

- Are you listening to God currently? Are you creating space to hear His voice clearly? Are you opening scripture and expecting Him to speak by His Holy Spirit?
 - Reading the bible slowly and waiting for him to speak is a wonderful way to hear his voice.
- Think of a time when you obeyed God promptly versus a time when you delayed. What was different about those situations, and what did you learn from each?
- Who in your life is currently "encouraging you daily" in your faith and who are you doing that for? If you can't name someone in either direction, what's one small step you could take this week to change that?

² James Thompson et al., *Hebrews, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2008), pg 92.

- Is there an area where you've been explaining away or justifying behaviour that, deep down, you know dishonours God? Bring that honestly before him today. What would it look like to call it what it is and turn from it?

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for speaking to us, through your Word, by your Spirit, and through one another.

Help us to hear you clearly and to respond in obedience today, not tomorrow. Soften any part of our hearts that has hardened and help us to be honest with ourselves and with you about where we have turned away from you.

Thank you that we don't walk this road alone. Help us belong to Godly community that encourages one another, carries one another's burdens, and helps each other to keep following you — all the way to the end.

Formation Practice

We want to encourage you to do this simple exercise every day for the next 2 months. It can take 5 minutes or an hour, whatever you are able to achieve (and as you do it more and more, you'll likely find it easier to spend longer listening and reflecting).

Simple Daily Rhythm

1. Listen: Read a short passage from Hebrews. **[Hebrews 3 this week]**
 - Free yourself from distractions (internal and external). You may find it helpful to play a worship song to focus your mind
 - Read slowly. Read the passage a few times.
 - [Lectio Divina](#) a one helpful method of reading and sitting with a passage.
2. Reflect: What is Jesus saying to me?
 - Pray and ask Jesus to speak to you. Sit in the quiet and listen. Is he asking you to do anything?
3. Respond: What will I do today?
 - Resolve to intentionally do something with what you have been given. There may be a practical step of obedience to take. Or you may be able to encourage someone else with what you have been given.