

**Christ is Superior to Moses**  
**Hebrews 3:7-9**  
**Part Two**

Starting something well is easier than finishing something well. For instance, let us consider weight loss. Have any of you ever started a diet with a specific weight loss goal? I would think many of us here this morning would answer that question, yes. So based on our own personal experience, is starting a diet well easier than finishing a diet well? And I believe that answer is obvious: starting a diet well is much easier than finishing a diet well, for if finishing a diet well was as easy as starting a diet well there would not be so many people struggling with their weight. And this brings us back to the point. Starting something well is easier than finishing something well.

And this is true not only in respect to the physical, material, and secular aspect of a person's life, but it is also true in respect to the spiritual aspect of a person's life. Or in other words, it is much easier for a person in their pursuit of God to start well than to finish well. And a great example of this would be Israel's exodus from Egypt.

The people of Israel had been in Egypt for 430 years according to **Exodus 12:41**. Unfortunately, the last two hundred of those years they had been held captive and were being oppressed by the Egyptians, and in that oppression the people of Israel cried out to God for deliverance, and God heard their cry according to **Exodus 3:9**.

So, what did God do? God sent a deliverer. And who was that deliverer? He was Moses. And what did God tell Moses to do? God told Moses, according to **Exodus 9:1**, to go to Pharaoh and to say to Pharaoh, on His behalf, "**Let My people go, that they may serve Me.**"

And did Pharaoh heed the words of God spoken through Moses? No! He hardened his heart. And what happened as a result of this hardening? God unleashed upon Egypt through Moses an unprecedented display of divine power in the form of ten different plagues designed by God to force Pharaoh to release His people.

So did this display of divine power, witnessed both by the Egyptians as well as the Hebrews, bring about the release of God's people? Yes, absolutely! They were released and their exodus from Egypt began. So did that exodus begin well? Yes! It began well.

It was able to begin well, first of all, because the Hebrews and the Egyptians were working together to make it happen. They were working to make it happen not only because the Hebrews wanted to go but the Egyptians also wanted them to go. In fact, the Egyptians wanted them to go so badly that when the Hebrews under the direction of Moses asked the Egyptians for articles of gold, and silver, and clothing, the Egyptians gladly gave them those articles to the Hebrews according to **Exodus 12:35**.

But this was not the only reason why Israel began their exodus from Egypt so well. They also began their exodus from Egypt well because as soon as they began exiting, God visibly manifested His presence among them in a cloud that went before them during the day and in a pillar of fire that went before them at night so that the children of Israel might know when they were to move and where they were to move in their journey toward the promised land or in other words to that land that He had earlier promised to Israel through Abraham, as recorded for us in **Genesis 12** and again in **Genesis 15**.

Israel's exodus began well and there were some very good reasons why it began so well. But now let me ask you this question. Did their exodus from Egypt, that began so well, end well? And what is the answer? The answer is absolutely not! All the Hebrews, 20 years and older, who had left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, even in spite of this very wonderful beginning, would eventually die in the wilderness without ever entering the land that they had been promised. They started well but they certainly did not finish well.

So could their experience of not finishing well be duplicated today among professing believers? Absolutely! Certainly there are today professing believers who may initially, after their profession of faith, appear to be doing very well or in other words who appear to be genuinely and sincerely following Christ but like the nation of Israel after they exited Egypt, those initial impressions might over time prove to be very wrong.

This is why it is very important not only for us to encourage one another in terms of our faith but also to warn one another concerning the sin of unbelief, which certainly will be front and center in my message to you this morning and in my messages to you over the next several months from the Book of Hebrews.

So as you know, the Book of Hebrews was written by an unknown author to a group of struggling Hebrew Christians living in Rome to strengthen their faith, so that they, in the midst of all that they were suffering, would not turn from Christ and His gospel back to Judaism.

So how did the author seek to strengthen to faith in this particular book? He sought to strengthen their faith by focusing on the superiority of Christ. So in what ways did the author of Hebrews see Christ as superior?

First of all, the author of the Book of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the Old Testament prophets in Hebrew 1:1-4.

Secondly, the author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the angels in Hebrews 1:5-2:18.

And thirdly, the author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-4:13). And this is the section that we are now examining. It begins in **Hebrews 3:1** and goes all the way down to **Hebrews 4:13**.

So, what was the author's first point in this section that we have already considered? Christ, as an example of faithfulness, is superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6). And we saw this in **Hebrews 3:1-6**. And this is where we left off. So after the author of Hebrews made this particular point what did the author do next?

Christ's superior example of faithfulness led the author to warn his readers against the sin of unbelief (Hebrews 3:7-4:13). Or in other words, after the author had presented such a glorious example of faithfulness that was even superior to Moses, he then felt led to present to his readers a very poignant example of Israel's unfaithfulness so that he might, in using that very poignant example, exhort his readers against the sin of unbelief, which was in fact the root cause of Israel's unfaithfulness.

And how far will this warning against the sin of unbelief extend? This warning will extend all the way from **Hebrews 3:7** through **Hebrews 4:13** and it will consist of two different parts that will focus on two different things.

So, what did the first part of this warning focus on? The first part of the author's warning against the sin of unbelief focused on Israel's past failure in the wilderness after they exited Egypt (Hebrews 3:7-19).

So if this was the author's initial focus in the first part of his warning against the sin of unbelief in Hebrews 3:7 down through Hebrews 3:19, what was the first thing he did as he introduced that particular past failure?

The first thing that the author did as he introduced Israel's past failure was to quote in Hebrews 3:7-11 an Old Testament passage from Psalm 95:7-11, which was a warning written by David to the nation of Israel to listen God and not harden their hearts as Israel had done in the wilderness after they had exited Egypt for the promised land under the leadership of Moses.

So now let me read Hebrews 3:7-11 and see if this is not so and what does it say? **“Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, [Now here comes the quotation from Psalm 95:7-11] ‘Today if you hear His voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, (9) where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years. (10) Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, “They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways”; (11) as I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.’”** So was the first thing that the author did as he introduced Israel's past failure was to quote in Hebrews 3:7-11 an Old Testament passage written by David from **Psalm 95:7-11**? Yes, this is what the author did.

But before we begin to examine this quotation let us consider how the author introduced this quotation in Hebrews 3:7. And how did he introduce it? He introduced it with these words, **“Therefore just as the Holy Spirit says.”** And these words of introduction by this author are very interesting, for these words of introduction by this author are emphasizing to his readers that the words that he is about to quote are being spoken to them not so much by him

but rather by the Holy Spirit who is continually speaking through the words that had originally been written by David.

So now let us now begin to consider those words and what we will quickly notice is that those words that had been originally written by David in Psalm 95 and which was not being spoken to the author's readers by the Holy Spirit can be divided into two parts. So, what was the focus of the first part?

David's account of Israel's past failure initially focused on their hardening after they had exited Egypt (Hebrews 3:7-9 cf. Psalm 95:7-9).

So let us go back to **Hebrews 3:7-9**, which contains the quotation from David's Psalm and see if this is not so. And what do these verses say? **"Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today if you hear His voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, (9) where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years.'"** So did David account of Israel's past failure as quoted by the author of Hebrews here in **Hebrews 3:7-9** initially focus on Israel's hardening after they had exited Egypt? Yes, this is exactly what David's account of Israel's past failure did. He focused on Israel's hardening after they had left Egypt.

Israel, under the leadership of Moses, had left Egypt with so much hope. They were following Moses the man that God had sent them to deliver them from the Egyptians, and he was taking them to the promise land. And they were excited about this and they had reasons to be excited. But something happened that kept them from experiencing all that they had hoped for. And what was that? Their hearts had become hardened? Hardened to what? Hardened to the voice of God!

This is why David began Psalm 95:7 with the exhortation, **"Today if you hear His voice [in other words God's voice], do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness [or in other words when the children of Israel hardened their hearts after they had exited Israel]."**

So when did the children of Israel harden their hearts to the voice of God after they had exited Israel? Let us continue to read our text. **"Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in**

**the wilderness, (9) where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years.”**

The word “provoked” in Hebrews 3:8 is the NAS translation of the Greek Septuagint’s rendering of the Hebrew word “Meribah” which is the word that you will find in the NAS translation of Psalm 95:8. And the word “testing” in Hebrews 3:9 is the translation of the Greek’s Septuagint’s rendering of the Hebrew word “Massah” which can be also be found in the NAS translation of Psalm 95:8.

So, what is the significance of these two words? The Hebrew word “meribah” meaning “quarrel” and the Hebrew word “massah” were the names assigned by God to a place where the children of Israel failed to believe in God for the provision of water in Exodus 17.

Significantly, the word “meribah” is used in one other place and this is forty years later when they again failed to believe in God for the provision of water in a place called Kadesh in Numbers 20.

What we can deduce from these accounts from Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 is that the hardening that took place in the wilderness was rooted in unbelief.

A hardening that was only able to take place because of their own weakness of faith. Sure they had been inspired by the unprecedented display of power that God had unleashed on the Egyptians that made it possible for them to leave Egypt. Sure they had been inspired by the manifestation of God’s presence in the cloud and in the pillar of fire, but as soon as the initial glow of these various things wore off and they were faced with ongoing difficulties of various kinds, such as the lack of water, they began to complain and grumble and doing so showed contempt for God and His word.

So, what is the pathology of a hard heart? The pathology of a hard heart is unbelief, followed by contempt, followed by disobedience.

May God give us the grace to listen to His voice so that our hearts will not become hardened as the hearts of the children of Israel hardened after they had exited Egypt.