

**Christ is Superior to Moses**  
**Hebrews 3:12**  
**Part Four**

Spiritually speaking there are only two kinds of hearts: good hearts and bad hearts. So, spiritually speaking, what is a good heart? A good heart is a heart that, at its very deepest recesses, is hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or in other words it is a heart that, at its very deepest recesses, desires to respond to God and to walk in the ways of God.

So, what then would be a bad heart? A bad heart would be a heart that, at its very deepest recesses, is not hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or in other words it is a heart that, at its very deepest recesses, does not desire to respond to God, or to walk in the ways of God.

This is the difference between a good heart and a bad heart. It is all about whether or not our hearts are inclined to God and His ways or not inclined toward God and His ways.

So let me ask you this question. When we are born into this world what kind of heart do we have? Do we have a good heart or bad heart? Everyone born into this world is born into this world with a bad heart. They are born with hearts that are not inclined toward God.

What does **Romans 3:10-12** tell us? **“There is none righteous, not even one; (11) there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; (12) all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.”** So based on the Word of God, is everyone who is born into this world born into this world with a bad heart? Absolutely! Every person born into this world is born into this world with a bad heart. They are born with hearts that are not inclined toward God.

This of course is the bad news. But now let me give you the good news. Though every person born into this world may have been born into this world with a bad heart and with a terminal prognosis; God, based on the death, burial and resurrection of His Son, is offering every person in this world, spiritually speaking, a heart transplant whereby God replaces the old

bad heart that is not inclined toward Him, with a new good heart that is inclined toward Him.

So how do we receive this new heart? We receive this new good heart when we, desiring to be set free from sin and all its consequences, by grace through faith transfer our trust from ourselves to Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.

It is when we do this that we will receive this new good heart which will be inclined to God or in other words that will joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man according to **Romans 7:22**.

So now let me ask you this very important question. Can we assume that everyone in this room this morning has in fact received a new heart from God? No! This is an assumption that we cannot make, not even in regards to ourselves. And why is this? It is an assumption that we cannot make, for if our assumption is wrong we could very easily find ourselves in a hardened state of rebellion against God that will inevitably result in damnation. Therefore it is best that we do not make this assumption but rather to continuously test our hearts to make sure that what we profess to be true about our hearts is being continuously confirmed by the way we consistently responding to God's works and words.

And hopefully all of this will come alive for us this morning as we once again return to our study of the Book of Hebrews.

So why was this particular book of the Bible written? It was written to strengthen the faith of a group of struggling Hebrew Christians living in Rome, who in the midst of a great persecution were finding it difficult to hold on to their confession of faith and were in jeopardy of returning back to Judaism.

So how did this author go about strengthening the faith of these struggling Hebrew believers? He focused on the superiority of Christ or in other words on how he saw Christ as superior to anyone or anything which would have been earlier valued by them in Judaism.

So, in our study of Hebrews, what have we seen so far in respect to this author and how he saw Christ as superior?

The author saw Christ as superior to the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-4).

The author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the angels (Hebrews 1:5-2:18).

And now we are in the process of seeing that the author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-4:13). This section that we are presently examining began in **Hebrews 3:1** and will continue all the way down through **Hebrews 4:13**. So, what have we seen so far within this section?

First of all, we have seen that Christ, as an example of faithfulness, is superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6).

So after the author Hebrews had made this point in **Hebrews 3:1-6**, what did this lead the author to 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). And this is where we presently are in terms of our study.

So how did the author begin this warning section? The author began this warning section by highlighting for his readers in **Hebrews 3:7-11** the past failure of Israel in the wilderness when they hardened their hearts against God, which was then followed by God's judgment of Israel because of that hardening.

So let me now read **Hebrews 3:7-11** and see if this is not so. **"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. (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,"'"** which of course we know to be the rest of the Promised Land.

So how did the author begin this very extensive warning section? The author began this very extensive warning section by highlighting for his readers the past failure of Israel in the wilderness when they hardened their hearts

against God, which was then followed by God's judgment because of that hardening.

So now after having highlight Israel's past failure and subsequent judgment, what did the author choose to do next? We will be answering that question this morning. After the author had focused on Israel's past failure in Hebrews 3:7-11, he then, in light of Israel's past failure, exhorted his readers (Hebrews 3:12-13).

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 3:12-13** and see if this is not so. **“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. (13) 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.”**

So did the author of Hebrews after he had focused on Israel's past failure then exhort readers? Yes! This is exactly what he did. He did not want his readers to make the same mistake as the earlier exodus generation, and because of this he exhorted his readers in the way he exhorted them here in **Hebrews 3:12-13**.

So, what was the author's first exhortation to his readers in light of Israel's past failure? The author exhorted his readers to make sure that they had the right kind of heart (Hebrews 3:12). Let me read for you **Hebrews 3:12** and see if this is not so. **“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.”** So is the author in this verse exhorting his readers to make sure that they had the right kind of heart? Absolutely! This is exactly what he is doing.

So now let us take a closer look at this in order to drive this point home even further. So how does the verse begin? It begins with these words, **“Take care, brethren.”**

The word translated “take care” (BLEPETE) is a present imperative that comes from a Greek word meaning “to see.”

These readers, from the author's standpoint, because of the great persecution they were facing and the apparent willingness on the part of some of them to return back to Judaism, were presently in danger. And what was the danger?

They were in danger of following, in the very same tragic unbelieving footsteps, of Israel's earlier exodus generation whose hearts had become hardened to God, as they repeatedly in the midst of their difficulties chose not to listen to God when He was speaking to them through His servant Moses, which ultimately brought judgment upon them. The author obviously did not want his readers to repeat this mistake.

So, what did the author do? He exhorted his reader to **“take care”** or in other words **“to open their eyes “that there not be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart.”**

The Hebrew Christians, that this author was addressing, as I have already said, were going through a great persecution and were in danger of going back to Judaism, and what from this author's standpoint would ultimately determine whether they did or didn't? It basically boiled down to what kind of heart they possessed. If they possessed a new good heart that had been provided them by God, through faith in Christ, then no problem but if they still possessed their old bad heart or in other words an **“evil unbelieving heart”** then they were obviously in serious trouble.

So let us for a moment take a look at this **“evil unbelieving heart”** so that we might better understand why the author was exhorting them in the way that he was exhorting them.

The heart that the author described in Hebrews 3:12 as an “evil” (PONERA) heart is described as an evil heart because it is an “unbelieving” (APISTIAS) heart.

Now as we hear this it should be very apparent to us all that having such a heart is a very serious problem. And why is this? It is because such a heart without a doubt is describing a bad heart or in other words a heart that has never been changed by God into a new and good heart, or in other words it is a heart of an unsaved person.

What does **Hebrews 11:6** tell us? It tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God, so if a person has an unbelieving heart or in other words a heart that is full of unbelief that heart is clearly an unsaved heart.

So let me ask you this question. Can there be in a congregation, such as ours, professing believers, individuals, though professing to be believers, who have “**evil unbelieving hearts?**” Absolutely! This is the point of this exhortation. And this is why he is giving this warning to this congregation of struggling Hebrew Christians.

When we come to God by grace through faith we get a heart transplant. Our bad heart or in other words our evil unbelieving heart is taken, and what does God give us in return? He gives a good heart or in other words a believing heart, one that is inclined to respond to God and to walk in His ways. But this heart will not be given to someone who is simply giving lip service to God.

This new heart is only given to those who truly, in desiring to be set free their sin and all of its consequences, by grace through faith embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior. So, what happens to those who come to Christ for salvation and seek to attach themselves to Him without that new heart? They are in great danger of falling away from God.

Let me read for you **Hebrews 3:12** and see if this is not so. “**Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.**” So why would those who choose to superficially attach themselves to Christ without a new heart or in other words with an evil unbelieving heart be in such great danger?

Now this thought might be a little bit confusing. How can those who have an evil unbelieving hearts and who are clearly unsaved fall away from the living God if they have never truly known God? In order to answer this question all we have to do is to briefly review what happened with the earlier exodus generation.

So let us go back to **Numbers 14** and consider Moses’ account of Israel’s past failure of the exodus generation. And how does this chapter begin? It begins with Moses’ report of how the people of Israel rebelled against him and sought to kill him at Kadesh-Barnea after he and a few others strongly exhorted the people of Israel to enter the land that God had promised them in **Numbers 14:1-10**. And why had they refused to go into the land? It was because their evil unbelieving hearts had become hardened even in spite of all the mighty and powerful works that he had done during the exodus. This

is why they refused to enter the land and this is also why they at that very time picked up stones to kill Moses and Aaron, which would certainly have happened if it were not for the glory of the Lord appearing in the tent of meeting in **Numbers 14:10**.

So, what was God's response to this? His response is recorded for us in **Numbers 14:26-36**. He judged them. To help you to see the severity of this judgment let me read for you **Numbers 14:35**. **"I, the Lord, have spoken, surely this I will do to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be destroyed, and there they will die."**

These Israelites had passed the point of no return. It was not as if the Lord was not still a compassionate and forgiving God but here in this judgment that they had passed the point of no return.

Because Israel's repeated hardenings to the words and works of God they had rendered themselves forever hardened. They had truly fallen away from the living God in a way in which they had rendered themselves irretrievable.

And this helps us to understand how a person who does not know God can be described as falling away from God as the author of Hebrews did in **Hebrews 3:12**.

Those whose evil unbelieving hearts have been forever hardened by their rejection of God's words and works can be described as having fallen away from the living God (Numbers 14).

Can this same kind of thing happen today within our own church? Could there be people among us that give the appearance of having a relationship with God through their confession and their association with us but who may have evil unbelieving hearts? Yes, absolutely!

And what will invariably happen to them if they do not come to God to receive a new good heart by grace through faith? What will happen as they continue to with us and continue to be exposed to the words and works of God through us? Their hearts will be hardened.

And as their hearts are hardened what could eventually happen? They could eventually go far as to fall away from the Christian faith in words or perhaps in deeds in such a way that they in the sight of God will be deemed irretrievable.

So how can we avoid a potential problem? We need to be continuously responding when God is speaking to us. This is how.

May God give us the grace to quickly respond when He is speaking to us through His Word so that we might know that our heart is good, and not evil and unbelieving.