

**Christ is Superior to Moses**  
**Hebrews 3:13**  
**Part Five**

Let me ask you this question. How much of a priority should a professing believer put on getting together with other professing believers for the purpose of mutual encouragement? Should it be a low priority, modest priority, or high priority?

Now I know there can be various answers to this question depending upon what kind of professing believer we might be talking to, but I would think that most every professing believer here this morning, who values the Scriptures and who has studied the Scriptures would quickly say based on the Scriptures that getting together with other professing believers for the purpose of mutual encouragement should be considered a high priority.

But now let me ask you this question. If you are one of those who believe, based on the Scriptures, that getting together with other believers for the purpose of mutual encouragement should be a high priority, do you believe that it will be easy for you maintain it as a high priority? And what is the answer? Absolutely not!

The world, the flesh and the devil will be continually seeking to distract us and to dissuade us from this commitment, but by the grace of God we must hang on for if you do not, it will expose us to spiritual dangers that have very serious consequences not only in this life but also potentially in the life to come.

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.

Why was the book of Hebrews 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 **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 of 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,”””**

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 after having highlighted Israel's past failure and subsequent judgment, then what did the author choose to do? 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, after focusing on Israel's past failure, then exhort his readers? Yes, this is exactly what he did.

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? Yes.

So how were they to do this? We know this because they were exhorted to **“take care”** or in other words they were exhorted to continuously keep their eyes open, so that there might not be in any one of them **“an evil unbelieving heart”** or in other words, as we discussed last week, that there might not be in any one of them a **“bad heart”** or perhaps even better said an unbelieving unredeemed unsaved heart.

So why, from the standpoint of this author, was it so important for them to keep their eyes open for this kind of heart?

If they did not keep their eyes open for this kind of heart and there was one or more among them that possessed this kind of heart, it would then become

very possible for those specific individuals who possessed such a heart to **“fall away from the living God.”**

So, what did the author mean by this phrase? Did the author mean that these individuals who professed to be Christians and who had attached themselves to this congregation but who also possessed evil unbelieving unredeemed unsaved hearts were in jeopardy of losing their relationship with God? Of course not! And why is this? It is because those possessing such hearts or in other words evil unbelieving unredeemed unsaved hearts could not have possibly been in jeopardy of losing something or in other words a relationship with God that they had never possessed.

So if we cannot understand the phrase **“falling away from the living God”** in that sense then in what sense should we understand this phrase?

We should understand this phrase in this sense, that if those who possessed such evil unbelieving unredeemed unsaved hearts continued to harden those hearts to the voice of God as He was speaking to them through His word or in other words through the message of Christ that had been delivered to them through His faithful servants, they would then be very much in danger of having their evil unbelieving unredeemed unsaved hearts forever hardened or in other words they would be very much in danger of having a heart **“that falls away from the living God.”**

And this was the present fear of this author for this congregation of professed believers and this is why he exhorted this congregation in the way he exhorted this congregation in **Hebrews 3:12** to **“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.”**

But the author is not done with his exhortations to this group of struggling Hebrews Christians living in Rome. He is now going to give a second exhortation. So, what was his second exhortation?

The author exhorted his readers to encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13). Let me now read for **Hebrews 3:13** and see if this is not so. **“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 exhort his readers to encourage one another? Yes! This is exactly what he was doing in **verse 13**.

So now let us look at this verse a little bit more carefully so that we might be better able to understand what he meant by this exhortation. So let us begin with the very first word of the verse or in other words let us look at the word **“but.”**

The word “but” sets the positive exhortation of verse 13 against the negative warning of verse 12 suggesting that an important remedy to the danger of an evil unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God is mutual encouragement. So how would mutual encouragement be an important remedy to the danger of having an evil unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God? To understand this we must understand what this author meant when he spoke of “encouragement.”

The word “encourage” (PARAKALEO) is made up of the verb “to call” (KALEO) with a Greek preposition (PARA) that intensifies the verb.

The word “encourage” (PARAKALEO) therefore means in this context “to call urgently” or in other words to beg, to entreat, to exhort.

So based on this understanding of the word “encouragement” how should we understand this exhortation?

We should understand this exhortation **“to encourage one another”** in this way. He wanted this church of struggling Hebrews Christians not to be indifferent toward one another in terms of how they were living out their Christian lives. He actually wanted them to get involved with one another so that they might be able to exhort one another, to entreat one another, even if necessary to beg one another, based on this context, to hold fast to the gospel of Christ and to that lifestyle that would be inherent to that gospel.

And why would that be important for them? If they continued to hold fast to the gospel and to that lifestyle that would be inherent to that gospel then it would be quite clear that this congregation was in fact continuously listening and responding to the voice of God.

And why would the author have even been concerned about whether or not they were continuing to listen and to respond to the voice of God as spoken through the word of God or in other words through the gospel of Christ?

There were certain individuals within that congregation of Hebrew believers who had begun to think and act in ways that were inconsistent with the message God had delivered to them through Christ or in other words the message of the gospel of Christ, and were in fact considering the possibility of returning back to Judaism.

So, what would the author have wanted his readers to do if they actually encountered individuals in their congregation who had already begun to think and act in ways that were inconsistent with the message God had delivered to them through Christ or in other words the message of the gospel of Christ? Based on this exhortation given to this congregation here in **Hebrews 3:13** there should be no doubt how he would have wanted them to respond. He would have wanted them to step forward and to engage those individuals; encouraging them, exhorting them, entreating them and if necessary begging them not to harden themselves to the voice of God that was being spoken to them through the word of God or in other words through the gospel of Christ.

So, what does this have to do with us? It has everything to do with us. Just because we may not have professing believers among us that might be thinking and acting in ways that could possibly lead them back into Judaism we certainly do have individuals in our congregation who could very easily, even at this present time, be thinking and acting in ways that would be inconsistent with the message that God has delivered to us through Christ or in other words with the gospel of Christ.

And what must we therefore do if we become aware of such individuals? We must, based on this exhortation in **Hebrews 3:13**, engage them by encouraging them, by exhorting them, by entreating them and if necessary by begging them to listen to voice of God that has been spoken to them through the word of God or in other words through the gospel of Christ. This is what we need to do.

Would this include someone in our fellowship who is beginning to lose interest in the word of God, who is showing very little interest in gathering

with the people of God, who doesn't seem to care a whole lot about living a life pleasing to God? Yes! Absolutely!

So why should we be concerned? We should be concerned because this manner of thinking and this manner of living would be totally inconsistent with the message that has spoken to us by God through Christ and continues to be spoken to us by God through Christ, which could mean that they may have what kind of heart? It could very easily mean that they have an evil unbelieving heart, which is left unattended, could very easily become an evil unbelieving heart that is forever hardened.

This is something that we, based on this exhortation, should not sit back and let happen, this is why this author is exhorted this congregation **“to encourage one another”** or in other words “to exhort one another, to entreat one another, and if necessary beg one another.”

And how frequently should this be done? Let us continue to read the verse. And what does it say? **“But encourage one another day after day.”**

Our encouragement of one another should not be viewed as simply an activity that is to be practiced only at our formal gatherings but rather as a daily activity that is to be practiced whenever we are with Christians.

And how long should we be practicing this daily activity of mutual encouragement? Let us go back and continue to read the verse. And what does it say? **“But encourage one another day after day as long as it is still called ‘today.’”** So how long should we keep practicing this daily activity? We should keep practicing this daily activity as long as it is called today.

So, what is that length of time that is being referred to as “today?” It could be referring to that time between now and the rapture of the church. It could be taken in a more generic sense as referring to the time while there is still opportunity to hear God speaking, but ...

Whatever the author meant by his use of the word “today” it should be clear that he meant to communicate a sense of “urgency” by his use of that term.

So has the author clearly communicated to his readers the importance of their mutual encouragement of one another through this exhortation in **Hebrews 3:13**? Yes, absolutely!

And then what is the final reason that the author gives for the urgency of this exhortation heeded? Let us once again go back to the verse and continue to read. And what does it say? **“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 why according to this author is there urgency for us to take this his exhortation seriously? It is because of the deceitfulness of sin. And because of the deceitfulness of sin people find themselves justifying thoughts and actions that truly in the sight of God are totally unjustifiable.

And could the consequence of this be significant? Absolutely! It could very well result in them, if they do in fact have an evil unbelieving heart, having a heart that becomes forever hardened, which would of course render them irretrievable to God.

So, what can be done to help remedy this possibility? It is by making sure that we heed the exhortation of **Hebrews 3:13**. And in order for us to heed to exhortation, what must we do?

We must make the mutual encouragement of one another in matters pertaining to the gospel of Christ, not a low priority or a modest priority, but rather a high priority.

This of course will require us not only to get as relationally involved in our fellowship as we possibly can, by being here each Sunday, attending our services and Sunday School classes; by becoming in involved in our growth groups and the other activities of our church, but it will also require us to be willing to step up to the plate if we begin to see in the life of any professing believer a beginning pattern of inconsistency with the gospel of Christ either in their thinking or in their actions.

May God give us the grace to encourage one another while it is still called “today” so that none of us will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.