



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Epistle of St. Paul To the Hebrews

Chapter 3

Bishop Youssef

Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)



- As we have seen, the recipients of this Letter were strongly tempted to desert Christianity and return to their former Judaism
- This passage is an exhortation to them to be faithful to Christ, to resist the rebelliousness shown by their ancestors
- St. Paul now turns to argue the superiority of Christ to Moses



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- This argument is related to the issue of angels
- God used the angels to deliver the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai
- Since Moses was regarded as the founder of the Israelite faith and Jewish religion, so St. Paul must convince them of Christ's superiority to Moses
- This point is made clearly in verse 3 and again in verses 5-6



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- The starting point of the argument is the priestly role of Jesus mentioned in Hebrews 2:17
- The Greek word for “consider” means to be engaged in serious thinking, why?
- The Biblical writers are never interested in thinking that does not lead to action
- Thought must inform life



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- Correct living will require correct thinking about Christ
- God's Household. Compares Moses' role as steward over God's household with Christ's role as a Son in God's household (3:1-6)
- St. Paul points to Jesus as our "apostle and high priest"



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- Apostle: the Sent One to accomplish a certain task
- This task is the high priesthood: the One who appeals to God on our behalf (Heb 2:10-18)
- The high priest should be:
 - a. Faithful
 - b. Merciful (Heb 2:17)



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- Jesus was faithful in his fulfillment of his role like Moses was faithful in all God's house
- But "Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses" (3:3) Why?
- Moses' faithfulness is described in verse 5 as the faithfulness of a servant who specifically testified of things to come



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- The things about which Moses testified have now come to fulfillment in Christ
- Thus, Christ is superior to Moses because the fulfillment of the promise is always greater than the promise of the fulfillment
- Moses acted as a servant over God's house or household, while Jesus was the Son



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- Jesus (the builder) is the creator of Moses (the house)
- "Whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." (3:6)
- These Jewish Christians are tempted to return to their former Judaism
- St. Paul gives them a warning -- you are only part of the Messiah's household if you continue firm in your faith in Him



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- St. Paul uses four Greek words to underscore this:
 - a. "Confidence": a state of boldness and confidence, courage, and fearlessness."
 - b. "Hope": the looking forward to something with some reason for confidence respecting fulfillment, expectation
 - c. "Rejoicing": act of taking pride in something or that which constitutes a source of pride, boast
 - d. "Hold firm" and "hold fast": to adhere firmly to traditions, convictions, or beliefs, hold to, hold fast, retain faithfully



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- That confidence is, in fact, the Lord Jesus
- The pride of our hope is the Lord Jesus
- Just as the Lord Jesus was faithful in the household of God by obediently fulfilling the Father's will, St. Paul wants us to be faithful also
- We are proud to be Christians and we are confident that He is the **ONLY WAY** to heaven



Jesus Greater Than Moses (3:1-6)

- This is our HOPE that we are holding firm to the end
- Whatever the pressure, whatever the difficulty that we are facing now, Christ's faithfulness and His victory over the one who holds the power of death provides us with the confident assurance that He is capable of meeting our needs also

Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)



- St. Paul wants to emphasize that we will remain part of the Messiah's household only if we hold onto our faith and courage
- To prove his point he is quoting Psalm 95:7-11 in Hebrews 3:7-11
- The Scripture is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (3:7)



Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)

- The word “says” means that Holy Spirit did not only inspire Scripture through the prophets who wrote it, but the Holy Spirit also speaks now and continues to speak through the Scripture
- The Psalmist recounts the sad story of Israel's 40-year sojourn in the wilderness
- They witnessed the Exodus
- God provided manna and gushed forth water from a rock at Massah and Meribah (Exodus 17:7)

Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)



- The crucial test took place on the brink of entering the Promised Land (Numbers 13-14)
- Twelve spies had been sent to spy out the land of Canaan
- When they returned, ten reported that they would not be able to defeat the walled cities and giants in the land



Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3: 7-11)

- Only two -- Caleb and Joshua -- reported that through trust in God: "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." (Numbers 13:30)
- At that point the people of Israel rebelled

Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)



- They were filled with fear from the negative report of the ten spies (compare with confidence)
- There was talk of selecting another leader to take them back to Egypt
- This wasn't just resistance against the authority of Moses, whom God had appointed, but unbelief in God Himself
- The Psalmist calls it "rebellion" (Psalm 95:8)

Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)



- God's response was anger at the unbelief of the entire generation
- His oath in this passage begins “truly...” (Numbers 14:21-23)
- None of the men and women 20 years old and older would enter the Promised Land and rest from their sojourn



Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)

- They would die in the desert; only their children would enter the land. Why?
- Because they would not continue in faith –
- The same temptation the Jewish Christian readers were struggling with
- That is why St. Paul spends quite a bit of time in Psalm 95 looking at the implications of their unbelief



Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)

- Verse 7 & 8 “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts”
- The Hebrew word for hear and obey is the same word
- Thus the psalmist was not just appealing for Israel to hear (listen to) the word of God, but also for them to obey that word
- Hearing the voice of God means having hearts that are open and responsive to Him rather than hard and closed



Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)

- The Hebrews were under pressure for their faith in Christ; they were being tempted to give up their faith
- The message of St. Paul to them was “Don't harden your heart” against God's effort to strengthen and encourage you
- Don't resist God's efforts to help you in the midst of your pressure and trouble



Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)

- Verse 9 (according to the Hebrew version of OT) describes Meribah and Massah as the place where the Israelite fathers tested God by trying to make Him prove Himself
- The demand that God prove Himself is the opposite of trust and obedience
- And the response of God according to verse 10 is anger
- They always go astray in their heart because they have not known My ways



Danger of Unbelief

Hardening of the Heart (3:7-11)

- Verse 11 “My rest”: Not entering God's rest meant not entering the promised land
- The use of the word rest immediately draws Genesis 2:2-3 to mind where God rests at the end of the process of Creation
- To refuse to trust God and to harden one's heart is to get stuck in the creation process
- It is to not reach the goal of God's work in one's life

Keep from Being Hardened by Sin's Deceitfulness (3:12-14)



- It is to be incomplete, immature, and unfulfilled
- St. Paul describes the kind of heart that commits apostasy:
 - a. “**Evil**”: pertaining to being morally or socially worthless, wicked, evil, bad, base, vicious, degenerate
 - b. “**Unbelieving**”: unwillingness to commit oneself to another or respond positively to the other's words or actions

Keep from Being Hardened by Sin's Deceitfulness (3:12-14)



- The problem of giving up on God and turning back is ultimately not a persecution or peer pressure problem; it is a **heart problem**
- “Departing from the living God” reminds us with the words of St. Peter; "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68)

Keep from Being Hardened by Sin's Deceitfulness (3:12-14)



- An important antidote to sin's trickery is Christian fellowship "but exhort one another" (3:13)
- How can we expect not to fall for deceit if we isolate ourselves from our brethren?
- The key word here is "day"
- We need encouragement every day to survive the pressures around us
- Failure to encourage each other on a daily basis could lead to hardened hearts by the deceitfulness of sin

Keep from Being Hardened by Sin's Deceitfulness (3:12-14)



- Sin's deceitfulness leads to hardness of heart
- One's heart can become gradually hardened, if one gives in continually to sin
- The power of Satan lies in his ability to deceive
- St. Paul recognizes that sin is "deceitful." It carries the idea of seductiveness, seduction
- The sin seems pleasurable at the time but it is deadly

Keep from Being Hardened by Sin's Deceitfulness (3:12-14)



- “Partakers of Christ” means we are sharers in the promise of the coming world (Hebrews 2:5)
- But that participation has a condition put upon it
- We have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence **steadfast to the end**
- “Beginning of our confidence” means the confidence that we started with

Unbelief Made It Impossible To Enter God's Rest (3:15-19)



- The conclusion of chapter 3 is built around a series of questions in verses 16, 17, and 18
- The three questions are built on phrases taken from Psalm 95 and the three answers are built on phrases taken from Numbers 14
- The relationship can be seen in this table:

Unbelief Made It Impossible To Enter God's Rest (3:15-19)



Who, having heard, rebelled? v. 16	All who came out of Egypt, led by Moses	Ps 95:7-8 Num 14:13, 19, 22
With whom was He angry forty years? v. 17	Those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?	Ps 95:10 Num 14:10, 29, 32
To whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest? v. 18	Those who did not obey	Ps 95:11 Num 14:30, 33, 43

Unbelief Made It Impossible To Enter God's Rest (3:15-19)



- “They could not enter in because of unbelief” v. 19
- Unbelief is defined by the rejection (rebelled, sinned, and did not obey) recounted in verses 16-18
- Defiance of God made entrance into the promised land impossible
- Likewise, refusing to trust God (unbelief) in the midst of persecution and pressure will make possession of the *promised time* impossible also



Conclusion

- Why is St. Paul exhorting his readers to "hold on" to Christ? What happens if we don't?
- How does sin trick us? How does it harden us?
- What is the value of Christian fellowship?