

Hebrews: Hear His Voice (Hebrews 3:6b–19)

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Introduction

1. It took three months after Israel left Egypt to arrive at Mount Sinai, a time filled with miracle upon miracle.
2. The Exodus was to be remembered by the feast of unleavened bread (Ex. 13:3–16). That feast, connected with the Passover, would be a yearly reminder to Israel of who the Lord was and what He had done for them (note vv. 8–10, 14, 16).
3. The Lord first tested them when He made the bitter waters of Marah sweet (Exodus 15:25).
 - a. The Lord made a *statute* (an evidence of *who* He was—their King) and a *rule* (*what* the King asked of them). The ancients did not understand the concept of the rule of law. They understood only a ruler. God was establishing Himself as Israel's ruler.
 - b. To test them, He guided them to a serious problem. Would they acknowledge His will in bringing them to this place and trust Him for a solution?
 - c. Notice what He said in Exodus 15:26. The incident at Marah was to demonstrate, by the *healing of the waters*, that the Lord was their *Healer* in every situation. This explains the text of Hebrew 3.
4. The question before us: Will we diligently listen to His voice? Do what is right in His eyes? Give ear to His commandments? Keep His statutes? That is, will we recognize Him and promptly submit to Him as our Lord and King?

I. The Covenant at Sinai

Before we look at Hebrews 3 and 4, we need to understand what God wanted of Israel in the wilderness.

1. The condition was established in Exodus 19:3–6.
 - a. The Lord proved *Himself* in seven events (v. 4).
 - b. Israel was to agree to a covenant without knowing the details (v. 5).
 - c. Their confirming the covenant made them a priestly kingdom and a holy nation (v. 6; cf 1 Pet. 2:9).
 - d. Israel did affirm this covenant (v. 8).
2. The people prepared themselves to meet personally with the Lord (v. 14).
3. The scene of the Lord's coming down upon the mountain was very scary (vv. 17–20; Heb. 12:18–24).
4. The Lord introduced His covenant by asserting His authority to make it (20:2).
5. The people's response is noted and explained (Ex. 20:18–21).
 - a. Note 20:20. I am a little confused—don't fear Him but do fear Him?
 - b. Properly fearing God as God is to trust Him and worship Him through heartfelt obedience and service.
 - c. But don't fear Him by pulling away from Him, terrified of His greatness and godness. He wants a relationship.

II. Israel's Covenant Failure

1. The identical conditions are set before the saints in Hebrews 3:6b.

As Israel at Sinai was His “house,” so are the saints of the New Covenant. Mere profession is unacceptable in our covenant standing. True faith is confidence born of obedience with the experience of hope in the Lord’s faithfulness. Christ is faithful (v. 6a); will we *hear* Him? (v. 7).

2. Israel’s covenant failure is set forth to warn and encourage wavering saints, exhausted by trial and test.
 - a. The admonition is authoritative, taken from Psalm 95, which declares that the Lord is our King (v. 3), our Creator (v. 6), and our God (v. 7).
 - b. The admonition is directed to His people, the sheep of His fold.
 - c. The admonition is simple: hear His voice (obey Him) and don’t harden your heart against (resist) Him.
3. The admonition is directed to those who think that what is heard is too hard and ought to be stubbornly resisted.

The psalm places the testing at Meribah (quarreling) and Massah (testing), the place where God provided water from the smitten Rock. The situation (no water) was drastic, but the Lord had already proved faithful to meet Israel’s every need.

4. Why did Israel not trust Him? The Lord provided two reasons:
 - a. First, their stubborn tendency was always to trust their own thinking, a form of self-deception and sin.
 - b. Second, their failure was not to understand how God works and, thus, not recognizing when He does. The root issue is that they did not know—did not cultivate a functional relationship with—the Lord.
5. The consequence of their error (vv. 10, 11)
 - a. They provoked the Lord to *anger* (negative action, not emotional outburst) by disgusting Him with their constant complaining and chafing under their testing.
 - b. The final result was their perishing in the wilderness, never experiencing the rest—peace, safety, freedom, and security—promised to them in the land (Deut. 12:9, 10).

III. Our Warning

1. The urgency of the warning is seen in the term, *today*.
 - a. There is a real sense of immediacy to our walk with God. We must not put off obedience because we are living out *now* in His eternal purpose.
 - b. We need to submit to God’s grace, for our hearts are set to follow our own will and *way* (Jer. 16:12; 18:12).
 - c. Disobedience and its testing of God rise out of an evil, unbelieving (untrusting) heart that fails to see that God is a living God—a now-is-the-moment-God.
2. The proof of one’s sharing or partnership in Christ
 - a. Our firm grip on what we understand to be that partnership—holding it tight in every trial and test
 - b. It is not how we begin the journey, but how we end it (death, martyrdom, or the Lord’s return) that proves the reality of our profession.
3. The seriousness of this exhortation is seen in the repeated quotation of Psalm 95:7 and the thought-provoking questions that end the chapter (vv. 16–19).