

Exhortation, Encouragement, and Assurance

Text: Hebrews 3:12-15

Date: 3-10-24

I. The warning against unbelief (Heb. 3:12)

Was going back to the old way that bad? Yes, for this reason: to turn your back against the highest form of revelation, that of Jesus Christ, God's Son, was to turn your back on God. All that the author has written and will write points to the superiority of Jesus Christ and therefore "to reject Christ was to demonstrate an unbelieving heart that did not know God at all" (Kent 73). This person they were rejecting is not some dead person or doctrine but the alive, dynamic God of the universe. No matter how much one clings to prior revelation, to rebel from the greatest of all revelation is to reject God Himself.

II. The appeal to the church (Heb. 3:13)

This is not a negative thing, but a positive encouragement of one another to come alongside and help another person in the body. This is the impact of the body of believers. "Christian faith is not merely a matter between a man and His God, but has also its corporate implications" (Kent 74). They are to gently warn and encourage each other and give help. In that day the believers were to encourage others to not go back, to not harden their hearts, but to accept Jesus as Messiah.

We also can be drawn back easily to the easier, less costly old life. But, a church doing its job says "don't be deceived". The spiritual life is hard. It is costly. But, it is the best and blessed path. God's Word says "come back". Don't be deceived. And we need the church to help. You need to be here both to help and to be helped. You know you drift away when you aren't here. Be honest.

Every day this needs to be done because every day the problem continues for us. The more we gather together the more we share in encouragement, exhortation, and bearing one another's burdens. Instead of criticizing, complaining, and carrying on, we must tenderly and boldly exhort one another.

III. The assurance of the believer (Heb. 3:14)

The belief is not just a one-time salvation decision but an ongoing state of believing day by day. See Heb. 10:38-39.

This verse gives great assurance to the believer. While there is a clear condition to continue steadfastly in the faith, the assurance is that we are made partakers of Jesus Christ. We have the promise here to be His companions and partners.

Conclusion/v. 15

The command is given. The warning is clear. The job of the church is obvious. Somedays there may be doubt and even unbelief. But that must never linger. We must exhort one another so that sin does not take a hold if us. Don't go back. And in the end the "greatest proof of salvation is continuance in the Christian life".¹ Don't be like the generation in the wilderness.

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1983). *Hebrews* (p. 93). Moody Press.