

## HEBREWS CHAPTERS 1-2

Read Chapters 3 and part of Chapter 4 from the book of Hebrews in the Bible. Quite a long passage and it is not that easy to understand. This is a very bad way to introduce a passage to be read.

But if I told you. I have a letter here from God. This is what God wants to say to you. I suggest it would alter how we listen. If I said this is God's word for you. You'd listen

If you are passionate about say cars, say specifically Porche cars, and I said. I have here manual about how to repair your vintage porch, then even though it might be really difficiutl to understand, you would read it. The fact that it is complex would not put you off. Why because you are passionate about Porches.

So the attitude that we approach the bible is critical. This is God's word, living.

And if we are passionate about God, we will listen carefully. So lets pray.

God this is your word to us today. We want to hear what you are saying. May your Spirit speak to us through your word today..

Each week I have asked two people to share something that struck them from this passage. Hannah and

Now despite what I said at the beginning if you listen to a passage like this and your eyes sort of glaze over then I understand. I read this passage on Wednesday and it's like. I have no idea how to preach from this thing. I read the commentaries and sort of understood it but how do you preach from it. How do I make it relevant for today. So because it was so difficult, and because I am a great man of God, I instead played a game of chess on my new phone app, which I lost badly, then I had a cup of coffee and then I made a new reaffirmed why Hebrews is not on my top 10 books to read in the Bible.

After all that procrastination, which did nothing to help with the sermon, I came back to it.

If you ever read a passage and something is repeated, it is always worth considering. Last week, the passage was all about Jesus, world was created through Jesus, world is sustained through jesus, help on time of testing is through Jesus, forgiveness of sin is through Jesus. and hidden in the middle of it was a warning. Can anyone remember the warning. Don't drift.

Four things cause drifting. Tide, engine failure, storm, anchor failure

This passage the warning seems to me to be right up front. And the Jesus stuff is sort of wrapped around it.

3 times. Repeated. Today you must listen to his voice,

Don't harden your hearts as the Israelites did.. 3 times he quotes this old Testament passage. Ps 95

Have you ever seen this stuff. Aradalite glue

Two tubes. This one. Glue but it never hardens by itself.

This stuff is the hardener. Mix this in here like this. Then this glue starts to go hard. Soon it is as solid as rock.

The warning here is front and centre. Listen to God's voice Don't' harden your hearts.

So lets unpack this passage some more. Then come back to this hardening business

Last week the writer made this argument about how Jesus is greater than any angel. Remember they had a bit of a fascincaiton with angels. Intermediaries. In our culture we have a bit of a thing for angels and spirit guides as well. Not many people have had a direct encounter with an angel. But some people do get into voices from the other side. Loved ones. Not good. Either just being conned or tapping into evil spirits

This passage the writer starts by arguing that Jesus is greater than Moses. Now for a Jew, Moses is the hero of the faith. Even more than Abraham. Moses is the superstar.

He is the one that lead the Israliets out of Eghypt. He is the one that performed the miraces. He is the one who came down the mountain with the ten commuadment.s he is the one who me with God face to face. Came back glowing withteh glory of God.

To the Jews he is the hero of the nation. Kiwis are not really into heros that much. Except on the sporting field. Sir Edmund Hilary. Maybe it is more like Abaham Lincoln , one of the founding fathers of America.

Writer is saying. Moses is just the servant. Jesus is the one that you need to be focussing your attention on. Moses was a servant of the house. Jesus is the owner of the house.

Refers back to this passage. Ps 95

Now there are 3 events this refers back to in the Israletie history.

Firist is Ex 17

Remember the Israliets had been in slavery in Egypt. God had performed released a series of plagues on Egypt. Last one was a plague that killed all the first born, including Pharoahs son. But the death did not come to any Israliet home that had painted blood on their door post.



and in the end Pharaoh had enough and told the Israelites to go. So they left, but then Pharaoh suddenly wakes up to what he has done. Lost all his free labour building all the great pyramids and monuments. So he sets out after them with his Chariots. The Israelites end up hard against the red sea. Trapped between this sea and the Egyptian army. God sends this wind that pushes back the red sea. Cross, and then the water comes back over the chasing Egyptians..

Great celebration as they realize the God has rescued them and that they are safe.

But then as they travel in the Sinai desert they run out of food and turn on Moses. Bitterly complain that he has led them out here to die.

Moses says to the people. Actually this is not really a complaint against us. You are complaining about God. See this incredible provision of manna and quail. Meat and bread.

But a few weeks later they reach another point in the wilderness. Can't find any water. Complaining again. Says that they doubted that God was going to take care of them. Tormented by thirst so the need was real.

This is the occasion that is being referred to. Didn't listen to the voice of God. Hardened their hearts against God. Despite the miracles what they had seen.

God provided water for them out of a rock.

Second event this refers to is Numbers 20. Same deal. This time near the end of their 40 years in the wilderness. 40 years they had seen God's provision. Run out of water again and grumble. This time Moses loses the plot and whacks a rock with his staff and appears to take credit for the water. God is angry about this and he is not allowed to enter the promised land. It is confusing because some people argue the Ex 17 and Numbers 20 are the same story. Birt messy. Wilderness of sin. Wilderness of Zin. Merabah,

Third event that the writer applies this concept to. Hardening of heart. Not the passage referred to in Ps 95. Principle is the same.

When the Israelites were going to enter the promised land. Sent out the spies. 10 said. Too hard. Huge obstacles. We can't do it. The other 2 said. Huge obstacles but God is on our side. God has promised us this land. People went with the report of the 10. Were not willing to enter this land.

3 issues from their past. Saying. Actually you are in danger of repeating history.

So the issues referred to very similar. They refused to believe that God would provide for them. They complain about

God. They did not listen to the voice of God in the sense they did not trust God's care and goodness.

Remember these are people who had faced real persecution. Homes lost. Jobs lost. Shunned by society. Not being about to socialize the way they used to. Beaten up. Real persecution they had faced.

So from the examples given we can see what not listening to God and hardening our heart looks like.

**It is complaining about God's goodness when bad stuff happens.**

**It is failing to trust in his goodness**

**It is about seeing obstacles as bigger than God**

**It is about taking matters into our own hands.**

**It's about not being obedient to the commands of God. Not when it is easy. But when it is tough.**

Alongside this idea of hardening our hearts is talk about God's rest. Again a bit tricky. Uses the word rest in multiple ways

Rest being the destination we are heading to. For the Israelites that was the promised land. They did not enter this because of the hardness of their hearts

But the writer is also saying there is a deeper rest. V10. For all who enter into God's rest will find rest from their labours, just as God rested after creating the world.

Jesus said to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Still trying to figure out how to live this verse.

So if we harden our hearts, and are not listening and being obedient to the word of God then we are not going to be able to enter this place of rest.

Yes, ultimately it is our final destination. Being with Christ in the world to come.

But there is a rest now that we can know. Rest that comes as we enter into true relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is a rest that we enter when we do the opposite of what the Israelites did at Merabah.

It is trusting in God no matter what the circumstances

It is entering into his presence knowing we are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ

It is living in a peace and contentment that says we don't need to work all the time.

It is found as we take a day off to celebrate a Sabbath.

We don't need to grasp after everything the world offers.

Rest that is a deep sense of contentment in who we are in Christ, no matter what is happening around us.



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Align with the warning not to harden our hearts but to listen to God there are two encouragements.

1. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Think about Jesus. For many generations that was done by deliberately spending time reading the Word of God, meditating on the great truths about God. Then a generation came along and said this is all very legalistic. We don't need to spend time with God every day. He is with us always. We are creating rules again like the Pharisees. I want to say. Fixing our eyes on Jesus and thinking about Jesus don't happen by themselves. It takes deliberate actions to do this. Everything in the world is not encouraging us to fix our eyes on Jesus. Most media is not encouraging us to do this. And it does not happen by itself. It has to become part of a different lifestyle. Jesus prayer that we talked about in prayer series.. Praying it 4-5 times a day. Way of fixing our minds on Jesus.

2. Encourage one another daily. Some translations have warn each every day. Parts of this passage seem to hint that we can lose our salvation. That actually if we harden our hearts we can miss out on God's salvation. Huge debate around this idea. Can we lose our salvation. Or does it mean we were never really saved in the first place. I think sometimes Christians can rest on the past. Yes I gave my life to God when I was 15. But the question is now. Are you responding to the voice of God. Today. Can't rely on something 20 years ago. Today, are you hardening your heart.

But there is a seriousness in this passage. We need to speak into each others lives. I don't know how we do that daily. But this is so serious, so significant, we need to speaking to one another encouraging one another to press into God. We need each other to do that.. We tend to get our backs up. My relationship with Jesus is my business. You keep out of it. I think we need to ask each other. Not just how is going? Got covid, about work, family. Often we never get beyond this.

Home groups, friends. New question that I think we need to give each other permission to ask. How is your relationship with Jesus today?

That would cut through the superficiality? Are you growing more in love with Jesus?

Passage ends with this incredible description of the word of God.

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and

attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 3:1-5:4, TNIV)

One of the commentators says the words used here. Language used.

Is that of God forcing us to look at him in the eye. There will be no where to hide. There will be nothing to hide behind. It is like our heart will be totally exposed..

One day we will be accountable to God. We will be forced to look God in the eye and give an account. That is we will be called to account for how we have listened to God and responded to his word. Have we hardened our heart before God?

This should be sobering. Are we allowing the Word of God to expose our hearts. Are we responding to his living Word? Are we responding in faith to what God has done.

It's not that God needs his Word to expose our hearts? It's that we need God's word to expose our hearts.

How we treat God's word is an indication of how we see God. If we grasp anything of the awe, the majesty the greatness of God, it will be seen in how we listen to God and respond to his Word.

One writer I read this week said maybe the biggest sin of the Western church is that we have trivialized God. We have lost any sense of the awe and the mystery of God.

If you have a look at this glue now. Rock hard. Hardening agent has done its job. Nothing soft and pliable about that glue now. It has hard.

Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts.

Are you listening each day to the voice of God?  
Are you allowing his word to search your heart?  
Are you choosing to trust his voice, no matter what is happening around you?  
Are you entering into the rest that God has for you?

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#### REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

1. Brainstorm a list of things that could be evidence of a Christian who is hardening their heart towards God?
2. How can we enter into rest now, when it seems life is so busy and complicated?
3. Does God's word to you seem living and sharp or dead and blunt at the moment?
4. Have we lost any sense of the awe of God - of a holy fear in responding to his voice? How could we regain that sense of awe?
5. Discuss how you could create a culture in your group that encouraged asking deeper questions of each other;



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questions like How is your relationship with Jesus this week?



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