



Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant

February 20, 2022

Hebrews 3:7-19

Clint Pressley

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

"Today, if you hear his voice,

*⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,*

*⁹ where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.*

*¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, 'They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.'*

*¹¹ As I swore in my wrath,
'They shall not enter my rest.'"*

*¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart,
leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every
day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the
deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold
our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said,*

*"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

*¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who
left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years?
Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And
to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who
were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of
unbelief.*

(Pastor prays)

Isn't that the phrase you want to hear when you die? "Well done, good and faithful servant." If you die before the night's out, is that what you would

hear? Or would it be, “depart from me, I never knew you”? When the Apostle Paul was an old man, he wrote to Timothy saying, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Have *you*? Have you kept the faith? Are you fighting sin and temptation and darkness? Are you keeping the faith that you claim to belong to? That’s the danger facing the people receiving this for the first time. The original readers were tempted to go back to their old ways and the belief that, if they did so, they would be better off.

What was true then is also true now. Temporary comfort, physical safety and social acceptance can only be bought at the price of spiritual disaster. And today I hope to use this passage to help some of you come back from the edge of disaster. Each one of us in here is capable of falling off into the deceitfulness of sin.

You know Facebook is a funny thing. It keeps us strangely connected with people we used to know. I see postings now and then from a guy I ran around with who was always an encouragement to me as a young Christian, and if his postings are accurate, I can’t help but wonder what happened to his Christianity. I don’t want that to happen to me and I certainly don’t want that to happen to you. This is a warning to believers. Brothers and sisters, this is a call to stay in the fight, keep the faith and finish the race. Listen, what God has done, God has done, but it is vital for me and you to hold firmly to what God has given us and believe that...

By God’s Grace, You Can Finish Strong

There are a few short phrases from the text to help us finish well.

Love the Bible

Join me in verse 7. That first phrase, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says.” Now, after saying that, the preacher is going to quote Psalm 95 which is about a story found in Numbers 14. We’ll get to that, but what the preacher is saying right here is astonishing. He is saying that Psalm 95 and Numbers 14 is the Holy Spirit talking. God speaks. Therefore God says, Psalm 95. Isn’t that what

Peter says about the scripture in 2 Peter 1:21. ²¹*For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* Here is our doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. The only hope is for us to hear His voice. To know what God wants and wills and demands, we need to hear the Word, know the Word, believe the Word and share the Word. We need to hear His voice. Not topics or politics or stories or anecdotes or opinions; we need to hear His voice. We need to hear it corporately in church, privately in our homes, repeatedly and intentionally.

Think of the things you learn just from the preacher quoting this passage. Verse 8 says our hearts are prone to wander and that we are responsible to fight against that. Verses 8 and 9 say we inherit a nature of testing God and we forget how good God is. Verse 10 says our sin provokes God's anger and we stray because we don't know His ways. And then verse 11 says sin keeps us away from God's best and His rest. That rest points to Christ and reminds us of the Gospel.

The Gospel reminds us that God is the holy creator who created us all in His image. That image of God in us has been disfigured because of our sin and we are separated from God. And the Gospel teaches that God loves people so much that He gave His only son Jesus, who lived perfectly, and died on the cross in the place of sinners. God raised Him from the dead in a sign of victory. And the Gospel says that if you put your *faith* in and you *believe* in Jesus dying in your place, the promise is that you are saved.

Look, by God's grace you can finish strong. Love the Bible. Ask God to give you a love for the Bible. Get a good Bible and read it, join a discipleship group, and acquire a taste for the Bible.

Don't procrastinate

Do you hear the urgency in this text? Verse 7 says today, if you hear His voice. Verse 15 says today, if you hear His voice. And chapter 4:7 it says today, if you hear His voice. The voice of God is speaking to you *now* through the Bible.

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. Don't rebel and resist and dismiss and downplay. Don't ignore and rationalize and put off and avoid. This is a warning of judgment and a promise of grace. To harden your heart means to disobey the voice of God. It's to read the Bible and then act in accordance with your own selfish and evil desires.

Take the Word, today, and multiply it by the three times it's quoted and then add the appeal. Today, if you are hearing His voice, do not harden your heart like the people of Israel did. Learn from them. This is an important warning because our hearts are fickle. Let's talk about what it means to have a hard heart. It's like Cruella Deville smoking a long cigarette taking Dalmatians to the dog pound. You probably don't think you have a hard heart. Are you rebellious, wayward, ignorant, undiscerning, flippant, faithless, disobedient, indifferent? The hardness of heart is not a reflection so much in the tone of your voice as in the validity of your truth. Even Satan has a good singing voice. The call here is not to procrastinate today If you hear His voice. What do you need to quit? What do you need to begin? Who do you need to talk to? Who do you need to stop talking to? When are you coming back to church? By God's grace, you can finish strong. Love the Bible. Don't procrastinate.

Guard your life

Notice the preacher's concern for his people in verse 12. Take care brothers. Don't think that won't happen to you. Don't think that just because you are baptized and on the roll that you are a Christian. Here is an acute awareness of the human condition, of our condition. Take care, *Blepo*. Watch out, take heed, be careful, because the best of Christians need to be cautioned against the worst of evils.

Here is the great care of your spiritual life, careful watching over your own soul. It is particular attention to your spiritual temperature. "Take care" means to consider the particular danger we are in, to consider so you can oppose it. Being ready and standing guard and even the way this is phrased, it's filled

with respect and humility and deep affection. It's calling their attention to the tendency toward sin in their own hearts and the grace of the living God that they would be falling away from. This phrase makes us uncomfortable, but it shouldn't. What it *should* do is remind us of the frailty of our own souls, the need for grace and the humility we should live in and the daily work of guarding our hearts. This is the very thing that Paul said in 2 Corinthians 13:5. ⁵ *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!*

Do you trust Christ alone? Have you been baptized? Do you love the church? Do you love believers? Are you fighting sin? Do you ever think about your soul? Do you accept forgiveness from God? Do you love God? Do you ever read the Bible? How long does it take for people to know you are a believer? None of these questions will save you, but it might help you guard your hearts and live so that by God's grace you can finish well. Love the Bible. Don't procrastinate. Guard your life.

Take care of one another

I love verse 13. ¹³ *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

The word translated "exhort," *parakaleo*, "to be strong, encouragement, to build up, to put strength into." This is the word of a confident hearted captain before battle putting strength into the troops before the fight. This is what the church is supposed to do. This is where you come after you have been beat up all week to have strength put back in. Look at the frequency in verse 13. Every day, as long as it is called today, it's the need to be connected and in someone's life as they are in yours. This day, today, encouragement can stave off spiritual hardness brought on by sin's deception. We need to be reminded each day of God's goodness, His unfailing love, His grace to forgive, His affection to heal, His mercy to sustain. We need to be reminded of the dangers of sin and the consequences. Sin blinds us to the dangers right in

front of us. The deceitfulness of sin makes it so that you mistakenly think you are safe when you are actually on the edge of a world of hurt.

And the preacher says to put Christian strength into a brother or sister. It's a daily cheering ministry to another brother or sister. We don't accept a depressing, pessimistic outlook of a godless world. To live in Christ and to die is gain. With Christ things can always be better. So we speak the uplifting word and build a fortress of joy into other Saints so that none of our brothers and sisters have their hearts hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. What does Gospel encouragement look like? It's a prayer for joy, strength, healing and grace. It's a reminder of God's care, providence, mercy, adoption, love and the Gospel. It's to put others first and to be others-focused. By God's grace you can finish strong. Love the Bible. Don't procrastinate. Guard your life. Take care of each other.

Hold on tight

In verses 16-18 are three rhetorical questions with three answers. Basically, starting well doesn't mean finishing well. And then verse 19 shows the problem they had. They didn't trust God. And verse 19 is a beautiful verse to leave you with, a beautiful privilege and a clear command. The privilege is that we share in Christ, His righteousness, communion, body, glories, and love from the Father. Hold firm till the end. By God's grace you can finish strong. We've been given a beautiful gift in Christ; now hold onto it with all you have. Maybe you don't know if you have the gift that is Christ. Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart.

(Pastor prays)