

# The Hardened Heart

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Hebrews 3:7-19  
**Preached on:** Sunday, November 27, 2016

Let me begin with a true story. The couple that sat across from me were like so many that I had counseled before: they were well educated, very well-dressed, affluent, prominent members of their church, but their marriage was a train wreck. What once had been mutual joy of marital bliss had turned into mutual misery of marital conflict. They no longer loved each other, they said, they only tolerated each other. They were nothing more than cellmates incarcerated in a prison called marriage. Now their relationship had become unbearable. They both had professed Christ and were baptized at an early age; they both grew up in a Christian home; they had both grown up even in a good church but their lives centered around their careers, their material blessings, body image, fancy cars and their children's sports.

When I asked them to tell me about their relationship with Christ, it was very obvious that they did not have one. Theirs was a Christ-less Christianity. They believed they were saved because of their past profession of faith and baptism but they measured their spiritual growth on the basis of religious externals like church attendance, ministry involvement, even their financial giving. As I listened to their story, it was obvious that they were either the hero or the victim of every story and it was abundantly clear that they loved themselves far more than the God they claimed to serve. And the sad thing is that all of this didn't bother them. They did not see it. They had no appetite for the word of God. They had no desire to obey the will of God. They had no hungering, no thirsting for righteousness, no mourning over personal sin and no longing to truly know and sacrificially serve Christ. There was no private worship for them. They had no prayer life, no devotion to God's glory, no burden for the lost. They didn't even have really any longing for heaven. In fact, they reluctantly admitted that deep down they were bored with the Bible and even Christianity in general. They admitted that they were frustrated with God and they were quick to give well-rehearsed reasons as to why. Yet despite all of this, they both were instantly frustrated, even angry with me, when I very gently raised the possibility that perhaps they had never truly been born-again. After about two hours, the session ended. They were mad. I was sad. In a year they were separated. Divorce quickly followed. They both remarried and are presently attending other churches or different churches and the masquerade of Christianity continues.

What happened? How do people get into that kind of a situation? Dear friends, the answer can be summarized in one word: unbelief. They were both guilty of the deadly sin of unbelief. They had never come to Christ in genuine brokenness over their sin, in humble repentant faith, trusting in him to save them which would have been evident by lives of joyful obedience. You know, we see this all the time. I'm sure it's happening here

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in this church. We see it especially in young adults who profess Christ, they get baptized at an early age but as soon they're on their own, they have no interest in spiritual things. Why? Because they never wholeheartedly believed the truth about their sin and the Savior. They never grasped the depth of their depravity and the terrifying consequences of sin. They never truly understood their desperate need for not only forgiveness but for a righteousness that was beyond their own. They simply did not believe the truth, the full truth, the whole truth, of the Gospel.

Well, this pattern is all-too-familiar. Folks get caught up in the cultural flow of Christianity, they follow the crowd by doing whatever their church says you need to do to be saved, maybe walk an aisle, repeat a prayer, get baptized, maybe they get swept up into some kind of an emotional or ecstatic religious experience and then they join the masses who walk through the broad gate of easy believeism that leads to destruction rather than entering through the narrow gate of genuine brokenness and repentance that leads to eternal life. They get caught up in the flow of a cultural Christianity. They even join a church but they have never been broken over their sin. They have never cried out for undeserved grace and trusted in Christ as Savior so they have never truly been born-again but they are convinced that they are.

Then as time passes and the mundane matters of life replace their original religious fervor, they grow increasingly unconcerned with the things of God. Christ and his word and his will are simply not important to them yet in their self-deception, they are convinced that they are okay with God and they become Academy Award-winning hypocrites convincing themselves and others that they are the favored children of God, but over the course of their life something very dangerous is occurring, something that they do not see. Because of the damning sin of unbelief, their heart becomes increasingly hardened to the things of God. They can come to a church service and the preaching of the word will have no impact on them. They have no desire to be like Christ, no desire to progress in holiness. They become more and more like the world. And underneath their spiritual veneer there is a growing contempt for God and for his glory and their hearts are filled with spiritual ignorance, ingratitude, rebellion, and even outright idolatry and the sad thing is none of this alarms them. They don't see it and if you bring it up they are quickly offended. Paul described it this way in Titus 1, beginning in verse 15, "to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."

Dear friends, what I have just described was the inspired author's great concern for the first century Hebrews, those who had attached themselves to the new Christian church but who were Christians in name only, those who had truly not believed the full Gospel,

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only parts of it. This is a deadly deception that eventually hardens a person's heart over time. It desensitizes a person to the truth of the word of God and produces in them a growing rebellion towards God and ultimately it provokes the wrath of God. These are the same issues that face every church today. Well, given these concerns, the writer addresses three important truths in this section of his epistle and we're going to look at them this morning. First of all, he addresses the issue of how a heart becomes hardened to the Gospel; secondly, the importance of encouraging one another; and finally, the evidence of genuine saving faith.

Here the author exhorts these Jewish people who in many cases were intellectually convinced of the general message of the Gospel, some even believed that Jesus was their Messiah, while others remained unsure, but the audience that he's really addressing here are those who had never personally committed themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. They never wholeheartedly embraced salvation by grace through faith alone, in Christ alone. They still thought that in some ways they could contribute to their salvation by keeping the law. So the message they heard was of no eternal value to them therefore they did not believe the full Gospel, they did not fully trust in Christ as Savior, and over time the lack of holiness in their life proved that their faith was dead and so some of them were tempted to fall away from the truth and fall back into Judaism, fall back into unbelief, which many of them had already done. And I'm sure when this letter was read to these churches, little groups of people, some scattered in caves, some in homes, some out in the forest, wherever they met, I'm sure that these people shuddered when they heard this message.

So the author applies Scripture to this kind of soul sickness and what he does is he uses an exposition of Psalm 95 to press upon them the danger of unbelief. By the way, there is a great lesson there, right? When you have problems, what do you need to do? Go to the word of God and apply it to the issue. That's what he's doing here and he begins by reminding them of why their ancestors wandered in the wilderness. Notice beginning in verse 7,

7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for 40 years. 10 therefore I was angry with his generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not my ways'; 11 as I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

This is a picture now of the danger with the first century Jews, some of them that were still wandering in the wilderness of unbelief. Now, think about it, because of unbelief, the

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ancient Israelites wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, their hearts growing increasingly hardened against the Lord their God. They persistently rebelled against him. They tested him so God judged them and the parallel is obvious here. Many of the first century Jews had likewise superficially attached themselves to the Christian church and they were in the same condition; unless they truly believed in Christ, they too would never enter into God's rest which is a symbol of salvation and eternal life and the splendor of heaven, as we will see more when we come to chapter 4.

So let's look first of all at this issue of how a heart becomes hardened to the Gospel. Think of the historical illustration that the Spirit of God uses here. He reminds the listeners of how their ancestors had been miraculously delivered from the bondage of Egypt under the leadership of God's appointed man, Moses. Remember they witnessed the supernatural power of God in the plagues that he brought upon the Egyptians, the power of the blood that caused the angel of death to pass over their home and save their firstborn. They were personally delivered from the wrath of God through the blood of the Passover lamb. They marveled at what they saw when God parted the Red Sea and then destroyed the Egyptian charioteers that were pursuing them. In fact, in Psalm 106 that I read earlier, we read how that miracle induced them into a superficial temporary faith. They witnessed God's personal leading in their lives with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They saw how God provided manna for them from heaven and water from the earth but they refused to fully trust him, to fully obey him, so they murmured against him. They complained against God as if God owed them more, as if he wasn't coming through. Rather than falling on their faces and worshiping the Lord their God and celebrating his undeserved love and grace and power and faithfulness in their lives, they thought only of themselves so as we read, they tested God, demanding that he come through for them on cue.

In Exodus 17, beginning in verse 1, we read about this. There we read, "Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, 'Give us water that we may drink.' And Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?' But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, 'Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?' So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, 'What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me.' Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.' And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. He

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named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, 'Is the LORD among us, or not?'"

My friends, this is how their hearts became hardened against God. They did not believe in him. They did not fully trust him in humble faith. "Why aren't you meeting my felt needs? Why don't you do what we're asking you to do on our cue? We just simply can't trust you therefore we're not going to obey and we're not going to serve you." And this is the message that the writer to the Hebrews is giving to the Jews who were in that same spiritual condition. They were tares amongst the wheat as Jesus described in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. The enemy can come along and he can sow weeds in with the wheat and they come up with the wheat and it is impossible at times to even distinguish between the true and the false. In fact, many of the false, the people that claim to be believers but aren't, they don't even really know it because of the deceitfulness of sin and the hardening of their hearts, and it's for this reason that he says to them in verse 12, "Take care, brethren." By the way, this is not referring to brothers in Christ, this is referring to his kinsmen, fellow Jews, not fellow Christians, not holy brethren like in verse 1 of chapter 3.

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," ["Today" referring to that current season of grace] so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

My friends, this is the great danger of unbelief. It is fueled by the deceitfulness of sin. In the original language, deceitfulness translates a term that means trickery or a strategy, shall we say, to cause one to believe that which is false in their heart. And this is how the heart is hardened like the couple in the illustration that I gave to you earlier, and perhaps like some of you. You say you believe in Christ, you say you believe in the Gospel, but down deep you really don't. Oh, you understand intellectually but you're not personally committed to the Lordship of Christ. Your sinful heart has deceived you. Your heart has become hardened to the truth, to the word, to the will of God, but because of the deceitfulness of sin you cannot see it. That's the great danger. You hear the preaching of the word and yet your life is unchanged. You are convinced you are fine. The person and the work of Christ has no real appeal to you. You simply live for yourself and you believe that God is good with you, that you're good with God, and you simply use God for your own needs. Why? Because your sin nature has deceived you and you can't see it.

Other people are more religious. They get involved in the church. They embrace some set of beliefs, maybe even active in ministry, yet their private life betrays a Christ-less

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Christianity. They have no private devotion to God and his glory. They have no communion with him. They have no desire to commune with him. No thirsting for the glory and the greatness of God. No longing to know more of Christ and the power of his resurrection. No willingness to suffer for him. But they think they're fine. Why? Because sin has deceived them and they can't see it. I'm sure some of you are uncomfortable right now because the truth is exposing some of the rebellion in your heart. Your blood pressure is beginning to rise, your pulse is beginning to race and your heart is doing everything it possibly can to rationalize away all that you're hearing and to justify your abstinence and to somehow discredit everything that I say. Why? Because of the deceitfulness of sin that is hardening your heart.

My friends, this is such a great danger and I assure you that if that is true in your life, as time goes on you will gradually fall away from the truth because your heart has been trained to ignore it. That is the great danger. Your conscience gradually becomes seared and insensitive like skin that has been badly burned; like the false teachers that Paul described in 1 Timothy 4:2, those who even believe their own lies that were destroying the lives of others. He said, "by means of the hypocrisy of liars they were seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." You see, friends, repeated deception will turn your heart into scar tissue and it will be insensitive to the truth. You will be desensitized from it and you will continue to live in rebellion to God when in fact you are quite convinced of the opposite. You have no healthy fear of God's judgment because your heart has become hard. You are insensitive to reality.

Later on in verses 15 through 19, the writer pleads with them once more, warning against unbelief. It's interesting here he asks three questions and answers each one of them with a question. He begins with a warning, verse 15,

15 while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me." [Then the first question, he says] 16 For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

Who provoked God through their rebellion? It was those who left Egypt under the direction of Moses and yet doubted his wisdom, failed to trust in his ways though he was God's anointed servant that had been placed in authority over them. They were privileged people and yet they murmured against God, murmured against his grace and his goodness. And folks, isn't it interesting if you think about it, we have an infinitely greater privilege. We know who Christ is. We can look back historically. We understand his death and his resurrection. We have been redeemed by his blood. Will we also provoke him with unbelief?

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Verse 17, "And with whom was He angry." "Angry" means "incensed." In fact, the Septuagint translates it "God loathed them."

17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

I mean, think about it: here they were, the recipients of undeserved grace yet their lives manifested disobedience and unbelief. They persisted in their rebellion and therefore God littered the wilderness with their corpses. Those whom God had made the singular object of his grace became the singular object of his judgment. And I would ask you: does this describe you? Do you persist in rebellion against God? Oh, maybe not externally but at least internally? Do you have a spirit that murmurs against God? You know, a good way of examining your own heart is to ask yourself, "How do I respond to the word of God when it exposes my sin and calls me to repentance? Am I able to be Teflon where nothing sticks, it just doesn't bother me? I just ignore it? Or maybe I hear it and I kind of grit my teeth internally and murmur against God." Well, my friend, if that is you, know this: that now is the day of salvation but this day of grace, this day of invitation will one day pass and your unbelief will eventually provoke God to judgment upon you and you will perish in your sins unless you repent and believe.

Verse 18, he goes on,

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?

Yes, those who were disobedient. You see, unbelief is disobedience.

19 So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

It's interesting, isn't it, here is what God thinks about unbelief. You see, it's far more than a mere weakness of the heart, it's far more than just having your mind kind of confused about the issues, you're just not real sure, you just don't fully understand the fullness of the Gospel. "Ah, I need a little bit more compelling proof before I'm going to believe." No, no, no, no, no. That's not how God sees unbelief. That might be how you rationalize it but what God sees is disobedience. Unbelief is moral failure. It is a stubborn recalcitrant unwillingness out of the arrogance of your heart to take God at his word. It's the fruit of an evil heart that rejects God, that rejects his law, that rejects the Gospel.

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You might recall that in Romans 10 Paul longed to see his kinsmen come to faith in Christ and he gives a long list of reasons why they weren't saved and at the end of that list, he gives the bottom-line reason by quoting God himself in verse 21, "But of Israel," God says, "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary," literally an obstinate, "people," quoting from Isaiah 65:2. You see, friends, unbelief is disobedience. If you're here today and you do not believe the truth about your sin and the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in rebellion against the most high God. In John 3:36, Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not," catch this, "obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." And I remind you again of Titus 1:15 and following that I read earlier, "to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." Peter says in 1 Peter 4:17, "what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

Back to verse 18, notice also those who disobey God, those who refuse like the ancient Israelites to take God at his word and to trust him, those who just live out their life beyond the pattern that God had set for them and established for them, it says that they will never enter into his rest. Let me give you another illustration of this. You will recall that because of the deceitfulness of sin, Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Remember he said, "You know, you've got all this that you can enjoy, all of this that you can eat from, but don't eat of this one tree." What happened? Well, you know the story, they rebelled against him. They disobeyed him and as a result, fellowship was broken. They were cast out of Eden and the whole human race has been wandering in the wilderness of sin ever since.

You see, sin produces unrest. Can you remember that? Sin results in unrest and some of you are wandering in a spiritual wilderness in your life right now. You have no real purpose in your life. You have no lasting joy. No confident hope of eternal life. No craving for God's name to be glorified in all of the earth. You're not praying for the kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Instead, you're just pursuing the fleeting pleasures of this life. In fact, if we were to take away all of your little toys, your cell phones, your televisions, your computers, whatever it is that you find life in, especially if we take away your health, do you know what you would be? Suicidal because you're trying to find life, you're trying to find fulfillment, you're trying to find joy in things other than Christ and it's not there. My friends, only Christ can give you rest. This is why Jesus said, "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." I urge you to make sure that you have truly believed the Gospel, that you truly know and love Christ, that you haven't just been swept along with the crowd of cultural Christianity like so many people. Millions of people today profess Christ but they

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do not possess him. That's the great danger. They have never come to a personal faith in the Lord Jesus. And if you're not sure, you need to trust him today. You need to embrace the fullness of the Gospel before the opportunity is past. We read here, "Today if you hear His voice," and hopefully you're hearing it. "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me."

Secondly, he speaks about the issue of what I would call the importance of encouraging one another. Notice in verse 12, he says, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another," it could be translated, "exhort one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Now, we must understand that sin is far more dangerous and deadly than any of us can possibly imagine. That's why it is so odious to a holy God. Sin is rebellion against God. Scripture tells us that sin is lawlessness. Sin is essentially man's innate inability to conform to the moral character and the desires of God. And at its core, sin is a deceiver that can harden a man's heart, especially when it comes to the issue of salvation; to make him think he's saved when he's not. And for this reason, the Holy Spirit inspires the writer to exhort the believers among them to encourage or to exhort their unbelieving Jewish kinsmen. Again, the term "encouraged" that is used here, or it could be translated, as I say, "exhort," *parakaleo* in the original language, it's interesting, it means "to come alongside another person to help." The same root term is the one Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14:16; he was called the Helper, the *parakletos*, one called alongside to help. That's what I'm doing this morning. I am encouraging, I am exhorting everyone to examine their heart to not allow the deceitfulness of sin to harden your heart but to believe the fullness of who Christ is and the implications of the Gospel in your life and so forth. And we all need to take this admonition very seriously with our unbelieving spouses, our unbelieving children, our unbelieving friends.

As I was thinking about this, my brother-in-law and I frequently laugh about a scene in *Andy of Mayberry* where maybe you remember it: Barney sleeps through the whole sermon with Andy trying to wake him up and at the end of the church service as they are walking out the door, Barney comes up to the pastor and thanks him for his message, and then trying to impress the pastor with his piety and his theological acumen, he says, "Yeah, you just can't say enough about sin." Well, Barney is not alone in his hypocrisy. You know, really Barney is correct. You can't say enough about sin because, dear friends, it's because of sin that men will perish eternally. The eternal destiny of men's souls depends upon what they do with sin and as believers, we are called to come alongside each other, even other believers.

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Do you realize that? Whenever we see any kind of spiritual decline in the life of a brother and sister, what are we supposed to do? We're supposed to go to them privately, try to restore them, and if that doesn't work, we bring two or three witnesses and we try to restore them, call them to repentance. Galatians 6:1 and following, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." The law of loving one another. So when we see a brother collapsing under the weight of sin, we are not to ignore him, we are not to keep a record of wrongs and then come and throw it in his face, we are not to attack him or break fellowship with him, we are to join him in the battle. We are to come along and get underneath that weight of his sin and try to bring him to a place of understanding and repentance, restoring him in the spirit of gentleness.

But in the context of Hebrews 3, we are to encourage or exhort those unbelievers in the church, many of which they weren't even sure. I mean, it's hard to tell. The tares look like the wheat. Some of them are obvious, many of them are not. Those who are in the process of being blinded by the deceitfulness of sin and therefore do not truly believe in the Gospel, those Jewish brethren who just simply could not fully embrace Jesus as their Messiah, come alongside them, encourage them, exhort them. Exhortation, in fact, is the very purpose of this epistle. Remember in chapter 13, verse 22, we read, "But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly." Take this straightforward, forthright, uncompromising word of exhortation. Receive it willingly. That's the idea. This needs to be our prayer as well because we know that sin is deceitful and Satan is the one that blinds people so they cannot see it.

Well, finally, he gives the evidence of genuine saving faith. Verse 14, he says, "For we have become partakers of Christ," that is by God's grace alone. I mean, think about this: we enjoy the indwelling Spirit of God, we enjoy Christ's nature, his graces, his righteousness, his life, our inheritance is with him. We have become partakers of Christ, "if we hold fast," said differently, if we remain wholeheartedly committed to "the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." "End" referring to our death or to the coming of Christ. So here we have a call to self-examination, a call to watchfulness. We are joint partakers, if you will, of an intimate, personal fellowship with Christ and co-heirs with him in the possessions and the blessings of the kingdom of God if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance.

Now what is that, the beginning of our assurance? Well, the term "assurance" can also be translated "confidence." In the original language, hypostasis, it described the assurance a property owner would have that the land that they possessed truly belonged to them because they had the deed to the land, and spiritually a true believer can remain confident

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that he has the title deed to heaven and the blessings of his inheritance because he is in Christ. He belongs to Christ. He has been made a partaker with Christ. He has been given eternal life. True believers will manifest the steadfastness of their faith in these truths which were indeed, I like this, the beginning of their assurance. In other words, a true believer is going to end the way they began their Christian life, with an unwavering belief that they had been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Like the apostle they will say, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in me will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Folks, are these not the truths that we came to believe when we came to Christ? Of course they are. We're going to hang onto that. We're going to have faith that those things are true all the way to the end.

Paul said the same thing in Colossians 1, beginning in verse 21, "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach - if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven." You see, those who fall away from Christ, who fall away from the Gospel, were never originally partakers with him in faith. 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us." You see, genuine believers will live lives of faith and obedience to the end. By the way, you can't have one without the other. You can't have faith without obedience. You can't have obedience without faith. Faith without works is what? It is dead. But if our faith is true, it will persevere. Our life will continue to give clear evidence to what we believe and we have no reason to doubt our faith when we keep the beginning of our confidence firm to the end. That's the idea.

Now, there are going to be seasons in our lives as Christians where we are going to live in sin, rebel against Christ, I mean, like Peter who denied Christ, but ultimately the true believer will repent and will persevere in the faith and they will manifest a life of obedience. Why? Because they have been made partakers with Christ and therefore they will hold fast the beginning of their assurance to the end. The point is unbelievers won't do that. They may start out strong but their faith and their obedience will gradually disappear and the sad thing is it will not bother them. They won't even notice it. They won't care. Why? Because of the deceitfulness of sin that has hardened their heart. And they will spend eternity in that same condition, forever blaspheming God in solitary confinement and torment, convinced that he gave them a bad deal and that they deserved better. Oh, the deadly damning sin of unbelief.

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1484/The\\_Hardened\\_Heart.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1484/The_Hardened_Heart.html)

# The Hardened Heart

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Hebrews 3:7-19  
**Preached on:** Sunday, November 27, 2016

Well, may I challenge you? If you're here today and you don't really know Christ, if sin has deceived you and your heart has become increasingly hardened to the truth, take this opportunity today, take advantage of it. I urge you while it is still today to trust in Christ completely. And believers, let's take serious the command to be encouragers, to be exhorters, to come alongside those who show signs of spiritual decline, of unbelief, those who you see are just gradually falling away. Don't we all right now have people in our mind that we know are that way? Let's look for opportunities to come alongside them. I know this is going to sound harsh but the way I put it in my own heart is I target them. I pray for them. I hunt them. I look for things that they're doing and they're saying and opportunities where I can interject a little truth; where I can somehow come along and say something that hopefully by the power of the Spirit will bring conviction. Maybe it's a card. Maybe it's, "Man, I heard this song. You need to hear this." Or whatever it might be. And then pray for them. Some of you were my targets or somebody else's targets and by God's grace you know Christ today. Isn't that an amazing thing? We need to be encouragers, exhorters.

Then finally, especially during this time of Thanksgiving and Christmas, let's really celebrate the rest we have been promised. In other words, let's talk about the inheritance that is ours in Christ. Let's bring it up with our kids and our family. We come around the table, we can talk about all kinds of things that are eternally insignificant but let's talk about our rest. "Man, isn't that a great concept? What does that mean? Oh, I'm so glad you asked. It's the inheritance that we have in Christ because we have been made partakers with Christ. We have this inheritance that will never perish, it will never spoil, it will never fade. It is kept in heaven for us through faith who are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time," 1 Peter 1:4-5. Let's celebrate that. Let's talk it up, especially during this season of the year.

Well, many truths for us to ponder and I pray by the power of the Spirit what you have heard today will find lodging in your heart and bear much fruit.

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Let's pray.

*Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for its power. But, Lord, we are utterly helpless to save ourselves or anyone else and so we cry out to you to do what only you can do. Bring conviction, bring repentance, bring eternal life we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).