
The Dangers of a Hard Heart

Hebrews 3:7-15

May 30, 2026

CUSTOM

<p>ANNOUNCEMENTS<p> Praying for the Honduras Team They leave this T
Rohi

Introduction

ILLUSTRATION

I have callouses on my fingers. When I first started playing the guitar, my fingers writhed in pain, crying out to quit. But there came a point when it just stopped hurting, stopped feeling, and stopped warning. While that's great for guitar playing, it can be dangerous when that effect starts to take aim at the human soul.

One of the most dangerous conditions of the human body is the complete loss of feeling. Pain is not pleasant, but pain is a gift because pain tells you when something is wrong. Pain tells you to pull your hand away from the fire. Pain tells you to stop walking on a broken foot. Pain tells you that something on the inside needs attention before the damage gets worse. A person who cannot feel pain is not stronger for it. They are in far greater danger because of it.

There is a kind of spiritual numbness that can gradually set into the conscience. There is a kind of callousness that forms over the heart not all at once, but through a slow and steady process of repeated resistance to the conviction of sin.

At first, sin bothers us. At first, conviction troubles us. At first, compromise feels uncomfortable and out of place in the life of someone who has been born again by the Spirit of God. But over time, when the Word of God is ignored, when the conviction of the Holy Spirit is resisted, when sin is excused instead of confessed, when obedience is delayed one more day, the heart begins to lose its sensitivity. What once would have broken us barely moves us anymore. What once would have grieved us has become normal. What once would have driven us to our knees in prayer has become something we can manage, explain away, and tolerate without much trouble.

And that is a dangerous place to be.

The most dangerous foe for the Christian is not always the open attack from the outside. Sometimes the greatest threat is the slow numbness that sets in on the inside when the Word of God and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are consistently ignored. A hard heart does not typically happen overnight. It forms slowly, through repeated resistance. It forms through delayed obedience. It forms through sin that has been tolerated long enough to feel normal. It forms when conviction is met again and again with excuses rather than repentance.

And Hebrews chapter three gives us one of the clearest and most serious warnings in all of Scripture about exactly this danger.

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 3:7-15 (NKJV) [7] Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, [8] do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, [9] where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. [10] Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' [11] So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' " [12] Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; [13] but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. [14] For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, [15] while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

The word that jumps out consistently to me and functions almost like an alarm is today. Not someday. Not eventually. Not when life slows down enough to give God a little more attention. Not when the consequences of sin become too heavy to carry anymore. Not when you are older and wiser and more settled. The word God keeps pressing into this text is today.

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart.

So here is the message in a single sentence: A hard heart is formed when God keeps speaking, and we keep resisting. Or to say it another way,

QUOTE

— Pastor Josh

A heart that hears God but does not heed God will ultimately harden toward God.

That is the danger we need to face honestly this morning. I want to look at the 4 characteristics of a hardened heart.

MAIN POINT Point 1

A Hard Heart Resists the Voice of God

Hebrews 3:7–8 says: "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion...'"

Notice carefully how the writer introduces this Old Testament quotation. He does not say, "As David once wrote," or "As Psalm 95 tells us." He says, "as the Holy Spirit says." This is important because the writer of Hebrews is not citing a historical artifact. He recognizes the divine authorship of Scripture, and he is reminding his readers that the voice behind this ancient text is still the voice of the living God. He quotes from Psalm 95, yes, but he tells us that the words behind that Psalm came from the Holy Spirit, not just to Israel, but to every person who has ever heard them since.

You see, the Bible is not something that spoke in the past; it's something that speaks in the present.

Notice the tense. He does not say, "as the Holy Spirit said." He says, "as the Holy Spirit says." Present tense. The warning from the wilderness is not a museum piece. It is a living word from a living God addressed to living people who are in danger of making the same fatal mistake.

The warning itself, while not always easy, is simple: when God speaks, do not harden your heart. And the first danger of a hard heart is not that God has gone silent. The first danger is that man has stopped listening. The issue in this passage is not the silence of God; it is the resistance of men and women who intentionally plug their spiritual ears.

This is why the passage puts it exactly this way: "Today, if you will hear His voice." God is still speaking through His Word. He is still convicting by His Spirit. He is still correcting through the body of Christ. He is still warning through the examples of Scripture. He is still calling sinners to repentance and saints to deeper obedience. The problem has never been that God stopped talking. The problem is what we choose to do when He does.

ILLUSTRATION

I will embarrassingly admit that there have been times when I've been so focused on something preoccupying my mind that my wife or someone else will start talking, but halfway through what they are telling me, I stop listening. My comprehension becomes that of the iconic talking adults in the Charlie Brown animated cartoons (waaa, waaa, waaa...). If that's bad in a relationship, it's certainly a danger to one's relationship with God.

APPLICATION

Every time God speaks, and we refuse to respond, something subtle but significant happens in the heart. The heart becomes a little less tender than it was before. The conscience becomes a little less sensitive. The mind becomes a little more skilled at justifying what God has already confronted. And we do not always notice it happening, because it happens slowly.

CUSTOM

Harden - ἁρμόω (skl r yn te) — G4645 · Greek verb (aorist active) callous,' used of the heart becoming resistant and unresponsive to God's voice This implies that every act of delayed obedience or silenced conviction is a small chisel stroke, carving the heart into stone

This is exactly what happened with Israel.

The writer of Hebrews takes us back to Psalm 95, which itself reaches back to Israel in the wilderness, specifically to the rebellion at Kadesh recorded in Numbers 13 and 14. Israel was camped at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran, standing on the very edge of Canaan. This was the land God had promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. This was the whole destination of the Exodus. God had not delivered them out of Egypt just to let them wander around in the sand. He brought them out of bondage in order to bring them into promise.

And after everything God had done, after the plagues in Egypt, after the parting of the Red Sea, after the manna from heaven, after the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, after the water that came from a rock in the desert, after forty years of watching God work in undeniable ways, they still resisted His voice.

They sent twelve spies into the land. Ten came back with a report full of fear. Two came back with faith. Joshua and Caleb stood before the people and said, "The Lord is with us. Do not fear them." But the people chose to believe the bad report. They saw giants, and suddenly God looked small to them.

They rejected God's promise through unbelief.

And that is one of the most sobering truths about a hard heart: a person can be surrounded by overwhelming evidence of God's faithfulness and still refuse to trust Him. Israel had more evidence than most people could ever imagine. They had seen the supernatural with their own eyes, heard the voice of God with their own ears, tasted His provision with their own mouths. And still they hardened their hearts. That tells us something important:

QUOTE

— Pastor Josh

A hard heart does not need more evidence as much as it needs deeper surrender.

Some people say, "If God would just show me more clearly, then I would listen and believe Him." But Israel proves that miracles do not automatically soften the heart.

They saw miracles and still murmured. They experienced provision and still complained. They were delivered and still doubted. The problem was not that God had failed to speak or act. The problem was that they refused to yield when He did.

That is still where hardness begins.

Hardness begins when Scripture is clear, but we keep negotiating. It begins when conviction comes, but we keep postponing. It begins when God says "today," but we keep answering "later." And delayed obedience is dangerous, because every time we tell God "later," we are quietly training ourselves to live without a sense of urgency in responding to God.

Some people here today don't need another sermon. They need to obey the last thing God already made clear. There are some people who are waiting on God to speak, but God is waiting on them to surrender.

The question is not "Has God spoken?" The question is, "Will I respond to His voice?"

APPLICATION

So ask yourself honestly: What has God been saying that you keep postponing? What conviction have you quietly relabeled as "just the way I am"? What sin have you decided is "not that big of a deal"? What act of obedience have you pushed into some imaginary future when the timing is finally right? What truth have you heard so many times without responding that it no longer moves you the way it once did? That is a dangerous place to be, not because you have never heard the truth, but because you have heard the truth so often without responding that it has begun to lose its weight in your life.

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart.

MAIN POINT Point 2

A Hard Heart Is Hardened Through Sin's Deceitfulness

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 3:12-13 (NKJV) [12] Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; [13] but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

This shows us the process: Hearts are not hardened by a sudden, catastrophic event. They are hardened through the slow, patient, deeply deceptive work of sin over time. And the reason sin is so effective at this work is that sin never tells you the truth about where it is taking you.

Sin does not walk into your life announcing its intentions. It does not say, "Follow me and I will dull your conscience, weaken your faith, rob your joy, damage your family, make prayer feel distant, make Scripture feel dry, and slowly pull your heart away from the living God." Sin is not honest. Instead, sin speaks in much gentler, more reasonable terms. It says things like: "You deserve this. You can handle this. It's not that serious. Nobody will know. You can stop whenever you want. This is just how you cope. God understands. You can repent later."

That is why sin is so dangerous... it does not merely tempt, it deceives.

QUOTE

— Pastor Josh

Sin will show you the bait, but it will never show you the chain or expose the snare.

Israel experienced this firsthand across their wilderness years. Almost from the beginning, they demonstrated a pattern of complaint and rebellion. They doubted God's promises. They despised His provision. They disrespected His leaders. They created idols when Moses was on the mountain. They rebelled when discipline came.

They lusted for what they had left behind in Egypt — as if slavery were somehow preferable to the freedom God was offering them. And through each of those compromises, each surrender to desire, each moment of grumbling that went unrepentant, their hearts grew harder toward the God who was doing everything for them.

Until finally, standing at the threshold of everything God had promised, they looked at the giants in the land and said, essentially, "No. We will do this on our own terms or not at all."

APPLICATION

That is how sin works. It makes bondage look better than obedience. It makes Egypt look better than the Promised Land. It makes the familiar slavery look safer than the frightening demands of faith. And that same ancient deceitfulness is still working in exactly the same way today.

ILLUSTRATION

The person who keeps having one more drink beyond wisdom does not say, "I want to become enslaved to this, spiritually numb, and completely dependent on it just to function." The person who compromises honesty in a business deal does not say, "I want greed to become the governing force of my life and money to become my practical god." The person who has allowed bitterness to take root does not say, "I want resentment to poison my soul and ruin every relationship I have." The person drifting from the church does not say, "I want to become isolated, spiritually cold, uncorrected, and vulnerable to the unbelief that always grows in isolation." The person who is looking at pornography does not say, "One day I want this to destroy my marriage, distort how I see people, pull me away from fellowship, and make me question whether I even want holiness anymore." Sin never shows that person the destination while it is leading them there.

This is why the Bible never treats sin as harmless or inconsequential.

SCRIPTURE

James 1:14-15 (NKJV) [14] But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. [15] Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

The problem is that in the early stages, it does not look like death. It looks like relief. It feels like pleasure. It seems like freedom. It appears manageable. And that is the entire strategy of the deceitfulness of sin: to keep you comfortable enough in the early stages that you never take seriously where those stages are leading.

Unbelief

Notice also what Hebrews connects to this: verse 12 says "an evil heart of unbelief." At the root of sin is always unbelief. Sin, at its core, says: "God cannot be trusted. God's way will not truly satisfy. God's commands are too restrictive. God's promise is not enough. You know better than God does what you actually need."

QUOTE

— Matthew Henry on Hebrews 3:7

An evil heart of unbelief is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from God; it is a leading step to apostasy; if once we allow ourselves to distrust God, we may soon desert him.

That is what happened in the garden. The serpent began with a question, "Has God indeed said?", then contradicted God's warning, then cast doubt on God's goodness, and then offered what God had supposedly withheld from them.

And then the woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make her wise. That same sequence: question God's Word, question God's goodness, offer what seems better, is still how sin works today. And it still hardens hearts through deception.

So we need to be honest with ourselves. Every resistance to God's voice, conviction, or truth is the acceptance of a deception that is gradually hardening your heart and chipping away at your faith, until you find yourself no longer believing God.

MAIN POINT

Point 3

A Hard Heart Loosens Its Grip on the Gospel

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 3:14 (NKJV) [14] For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

This is a sobering verse. It is a conditional promise that belongs not to the person who merely began with an external association with Christianity, but to the one who continues and perseveres in genuine faith to the end.

Now we have to be careful here and say what the writer is not saying.

He is not saying that every believer who struggles, doubts, or stumbles is in danger of having never known Christ at all. Struggle is part of the Christian life. There are blood-bought believers who battle through seasons of doubt, who grieve deeply over their sin, who wrestle through suffering, and who pray from a broken place, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." That is not the hard heart. A tender heart may be weak, but it still wants God. A tender heart may stumble, but it still grieves over the fall. A tender heart may struggle, but it will still open its hands and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart."

The danger in Hebrews 3 is the person who has abandoned faith and hope in Christ. It is the person whose entire relationship with God exists in the "past tense." They can point back to an experience, a prayer, or even a season, but present-day trust, surrender, and obedience? It's not there.

QUOTE

A past profession is not a substitute for present faith.

And how does one let go of something they should hold on to?

ILLUSTRATION

Think about a free solo climber. No ropes. No harness. No safety system of any kind — just a person, a wall of rock, and their hands. What keeps them alive is not complicated: it is the grip. And the terrifying reality of free solo climbing is not that the climber plans to let go. Nobody plans to fall. The danger is the slow, subtle loss of grip strength and fatigue setting in across a long climb, a hold that is slightly less secure than it looked, fingers that are beginning to open without the climber fully registering that they are. By the time the loosening becomes obvious, it may already be too late to do anything about it.

APPLICATION

That image is what the Hebrews are describing. The person with a hardening heart is not planning to let go of Christ, but sin and compromise begin to erode their confidence in the gospel's core message. Sin is working their fingers open, one compromise at a time, one unrepentant decision at a time, one ignored conviction at a time. And they often do not feel it happening because the deceitfulness of sin has made the loosening feel like rest.

I don't say this to scare anyone into thinking that they can lose their salvation over a lapse or failure. The Savior's grip is much stronger than yours... Regarding your salvation, it has been secured in the mighty grip of Jesus. But we must hold the beginning of our confidence to the end. What was the beginning:

That Jesus is enough. That my sin is great, but His grace is greater. That I am a wretched sinner, but He is a wonderful Savior. That without Jesus, I am hopeless in life and eternity. But the deceitfulness of sin hardens the heart to the point of letting go of that hope, confidence, and assurance.

APPLICATION

Christian, whatever you do, do not give up on Jesus. Do not trade present trust for past nostalgia or living faith for religious memory. Do not trade the living God for a comfortable return to whatever "Egypt" your heart most longs for.

Hebrews 3:12 warns against "departing from the living God," and Hebrews 2:1 tells us to give earnest heed to what we have heard "lest we drift away." Drifting is dangerous because it feels calm. No one drifts upstream... drifting requires no effort. You simply neglect direction long enough, and the current carries you somewhere you never consciously chose to go. Nobody wakes up miles from God without first ignoring the small steps that slowly carried them there. That is why the Christian life cannot be lived on autopilot. You do not become spiritually mature by accident.

You hold fast. You give earnest heed. You listen. You repent. You obey. You abide.

Jesus said in John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." The hard heart stops abiding while maintaining all the appearances of connection. It keeps the language. It keeps the routine, but life is drying up from the inside.

APPLICATION

Another probing question we need to ask ourselves is, "Do I believe in Jesus or simply believe in Jesus? Do I acknowledge that He exists, or do I submit to His active, present authority in my life?"

The children of Israel were not atheists in the wilderness. Their problem was not that they stopped believing God existed — they believed He existed. They simply did not believe Him. They did not trust His promise. They did not trust His goodness. They did not trust His provision. They believed in God while refusing to actually believe God to the point of obedient surrender.

There are many people sitting in churches across this country in exactly the same condition. They believe Jesus rose from the dead, but when He speaks, they do not yield. When He commands, they negotiate. When He convicts, they delay. When He warns, they dismiss. And Hebrews says to all: Beware.

MAIN POINT Point 4

A Hard Heart Must Be Confronted Today

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 3:13, 15 (NKJV) [13] but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. [15] while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

Hebrews doesn't merely state the danger; it gives us a remedy. He gives us two responses to the danger of a hardening heart:

hear His voice today exhort one another daily

One of God's primary protections against a hard heart is the faithful presence and honest, loving correction of other believers. This is why staying connected to the body of Christ and being an engaged part of it is so important.

APPLICATION

This matters because a person with a hardening heart almost always begins pulling away from the very voices God would use to rescue them. They drift from fellowship, and they stop confessing. They become resistant to correction and stay close only to people who will affirm them. They avoid the people who ask hard questions. They keep every spiritual conversation at the surface level. And the tragedy is that the very thing they are running from (the exhortation of other believers) is one of the things God has ordained to keep them from falling off the edge of the cliff!

Hebrews says, "exhort one another daily." Not occasionally. Not when someone finally hits rock bottom, and there is no more room for denial. Daily. While it is still called "today." While the window of tenderness is still open. Hebrews 10:24–25 presses the same point: "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

QUOTE

— David Guzik on Hebrews 3:7

A United States survey found that more than 78% of the general public and 70% of churchgoing people believed that "you can be a good Christian without attending church." (Roof and McKinney)

The church is not merely a place where we attend services and go home. The church is a family where God helps keep His people awake. It is a body where He uses one member to strengthen another, where one person's faithfulness can interrupt another person's drifting before it becomes a departure. A soft heart is often preserved by people who love us enough to say the uncomfortable thing before it becomes the crisis thing.

QUOTE

Sin deceives best in isolation, but its lies become evident when confronted by the loving truth of another believer.

APPLICATION

Let me ask you directly: who has real permission to exhort you? Who can ask you hard questions and expect an honest answer? Who in your life can tell you when your heart is getting cold, and who will you actually listen to when they do? On the other side: Who are you exhorting? Who in your community of faith are you are connected to and love enough to notice when they are beginning to drift?

But the passage does not end with the remedy. It ends with urgency. It repeats the word today one final time, and that repetition is not accidental.

Today is a word of mercy; Today means conviction is still present and repentance is still possible. Today means the door is still open and your heart does not have to stay where it is. But today is also a word of urgency, because there is no promise that the conviction you ignore today will feel as sharp or present tomorrow. There is no guarantee that the warning you dismiss this morning will shake you the same way six months from now. There is no assurance that the opportunity you have to repent today will always be available to you in the same form.

Please understand the uneasiness of conviction. The Spirit of God does not convict you in order to destroy us; He convicts you in order to bring us back. The Word of God does not pierce because God wants to make you bleed; it pierces because God is exposing what must be healed before the wound goes deeper.

Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit."

ILLUSTRATION

A number of years back, I took my kids on a hike to the South Yuba River. We had a great time skipping rocks, and I found one that stopped me... it was shaped almost exactly like a heart. A heart of stone, smooth and cold from the water. And that image has never really left me, because according to Ezekiel 36, that is precisely what God promises to deal with.

SCRIPTURE

Ezekiel 36:26 (NKJV) [26] I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

That is the hope of the gospel. God does not merely command hard hearts to soften themselves and leave us to figure out how. He gives new hearts. He removes the stone and puts flesh in its place. He makes dead sinners alive. And for the believer, the ongoing call is to keep that heart tender before Him; to not let sin callous and kill what grace has softened and made alive,

Conclusion

The question this morning is not simply, "Have you sinned?" We all have. Every person in this room has sinned, and the gospel of Jesus Christ is more than sufficient to cover every one of those failures. The questions are: can you still be corrected? Can the Word of God still pierce you? Can the Spirit of God still convict you? Can a brother or a sister still exhort you and actually get through? Can you still open your hands before God and mean it when you say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart"? Can you still hear His voice?

A hard heart is dangerous, but it is not beyond the reach of God's grace. The same God who says, "Do not harden your hearts," is the God who says, "I will give you a new heart." The same God who warns is the God who saves. The same God who convicts is the God who restores. That is not a contradiction; that is the gospel.

Some of you this morning do not need more information. You need to surrender. You already know what God has been saying. You already know where the conviction has been living. You already know what you have been explaining away, what you have been drifting toward, what sin has been quietly lying to you about for longer than you want to admit. The mercy of God today is that He is still saying the same word He has been saying throughout this entire passage.

SCRIPTURE

Joel 2:13 (NKJV) [13] So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.

Today.

So today — repent. Return. Confess. Obey. Hold fast to Christ. Stop drifting. Because a heart that hears God but does not heed God will ultimately harden toward God. But a heart that hears His voice and responds in faith will find that His grace is still sufficient, His mercy is still near, and His promise is still true.

Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your heart.

Communion