

**Hebrews**



**Promises  
Faithfully  
Kept**

**Hebrews 3.7-19 (ISV)**

**Warnings Help Those Who Heed**

**Only those who hear will heed.**

**Only those who heed will look  
and find.**

**Only those who find will finish.**

Hebrews 3.7-19 (ISV)

[start with the screen of abbreviated points] To start out this morning, I'm going to give abbreviated versions of the points for today's sermon. So you'll want to write down each point with space between each point for further notes. Also, I'm going to expand on each point as we get to it.

- Only those who hear will heed.
- Only those who heed will look and find.
- Only those who find will finish.

We are meant to have and enjoy life.

Our experience of life as we know it is supposed to make us long for God and for a renewed creation. This world still communicates the glory of God, but it also communicates that things are not how they were designed to be.

The Psalmist appreciated this truth when he wrote:

**63 God, you are my God!  
I will fervently seek you.  
My soul thirsts for you;  
my flesh longs for you in a dry,  
weary, and parched land.**

**So I have looked for you in the  
sanctuary,  
to behold your power and glory.  
Because your gracious love is  
better than life itself,  
my lips will praise you.**

But we often settle for an existence that is wrapped up around us and what enjoyment we can get from it. Instead of seeing living as the opportunity to know and relate to God, we often treat it as a game.



I grew up on the tail side of the generation that first fell in love with video games. Long before you had apps, you had only one, maybe two types of video game consoles. Back in our day if you wanted to change the game, you had actually had to get up, turn the console off, and change out the video game.

Kids like me loved the idea of the adventures we could go on in these games. It felt like we were taking risks with our characters without having physically having to risk our own health, at least in the moment. Usually your character would have a status bar letting you know how healthy he or she is. Some games would allow you to revive characters after they run out of health. Those were the easier ones.

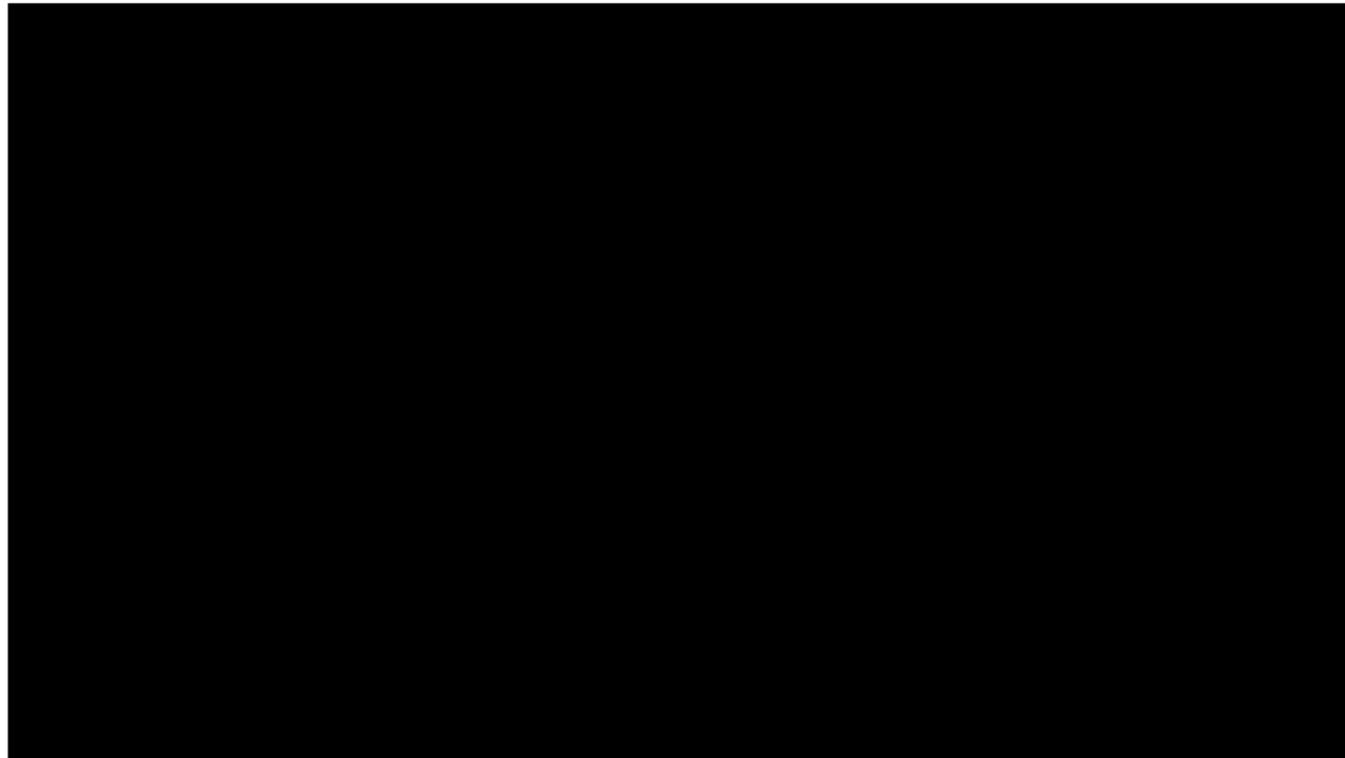


In the harder ones, like the Legend of Zelda games, running out of health would mean game over. Then the silhouette of the bad guy would appear on screen laughing maniacally at you.

While video games were fun diversions for kids, allowing us to feel like we were taking risks without being put into physical danger, those diversions also feed a dangerous view found in the West.

Our society tends to communicate that our worlds revolve around us, that we can replenish our health whenever we need to by traveling to the corner pharmacy or pick up supplies from 1 of 7 different grocery stores within a three mile radius. I love having those stores nearby, but we have to watch out for the danger of thinking we are self-sufficient without God.

In comparison to those who sincerely pray for God to provide bread for today, those in the West have begun treating life like a video game, that is until you get a wakeup call.



The war going on in Ukraine is a wakeup call. When you get a serious health diagnosis it is a wakeup call.

We need regular wakeup calls built into our life, wake up calls that are not as drastic drastic so that we are disciplined to choose life over a video game version of it.

We need to walk in the creation without screens. We need to take in God's Word with eyes of faith, looking forward to seeing the beauty therein. We need to set aside time just to pray and commune with the Maker of all creation. We need to gather with the church for worship of God and for mutual encouragement in this journey of life.

But video games aren't all bad. There are some good things to them. One thing they do remind us of is that we have a health bar that others are able to see, but we may not be able to see it. Your character in a game doesn't look up to see what his health is, but you are able to see it when looking at him. We have health bars displayed over our lives that can tell us how we are doing.

But here's the catch, you can't see it by yourself. You need God, His Word, and His people to know how you are doing. So we need to hear the warnings of God and his people like we read today in our passage. We need these warnings to know if we are in danger of falling within the wilderness of this world.

**7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,  
“Today, if you hear his voice,  
8 do not harden your hearts  
as they did when they provoked me  
during the time of testing in the  
wilderness.**

**9 There your ancestors tested me,  
even though they had seen my actions for  
40 years.**

**That is why I was indignant with that  
generation and said,  
'They are always going astray in their  
hearts,  
and they have not known my ways.'**

**11 So in my anger I swore a solemn  
oath  
that they would never enter my  
rest.”**

**12 See to it, my brothers, that no  
evil, unbelieving heart is found in  
any of you, as shown by your  
turning away from the living God.**

**13 Instead, continue to encourage one another every day, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, 14 because we are the Messiah's partners only if we hold on to our original confidence to the end.**

**15 As it is said,  
“Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts  
as they did when they  
provoked me.”**

**16 Now who heard him and  
provoked him?**

**Was it not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was he angry for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned and whose bodies fell dead in the wilderness?**

**18 And to whom did he swear that they would never enter his rest? It was to those who disobeyed him, was it not? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of their unbelief.**



Pray

**Only those who have ears to  
hear God's Word will heed his  
warnings.**

Only those who hear will heed.

- Only those who have ears to hear God's Word will heed his warnings.

I've known professing Christians to struggle with the warning passages in Hebrews. It's really easy either to dismiss the warnings as not for them or to doubt that they are accepted by God. They should intimidate us, but the proper end of these warnings is for God to use them graciously to sustain those who trust in Christ.

I still remember working at a Christian camp and the summer staffers having a discussion on the warnings with one of the full-time staff one evening. We were in the sugar shack. The sugar shack was exactly what it sounds like, a small building filled with sugary treats. It was situated right across from the large building where worship gatherings were held. After nightly worship services kids would run across the 50 yards to the Sugar Shack to load up on slushes, soft drinks, hard candy, chocolate, colored sugar packets, and cotton candy.

We would have to clean and mop up that building every night. Amazingly, somehow, sugar would end up somewhere on the floor and countertops. The nightly cleaning would give us opportunities to get into in-depth conversations. The adult full-time staff member responded to the conversation about these warnings that she feels very uncomfortable with the passages, that they frighten her.

Here's the deal with the warning passages. They should intimidate us, but only those who have ears to hear them will listen to the warnings. You will only listen to them if you have a starting place of trust in Christ.

As this passage starts off, the Holy Spirit speaks by means of the written Word. As B.B. Warfield said, "When Scripture speaks, God speaks." (cited by Mohler, 49) It is not just that God is speaking. He is speaking to us. The quote from Ps. 95 starts with "Today if you hear His voice . . ."

As another theologian wrote, “When we hear Scripture, read Scripture, study Scripture, or encounter Scripture in any way, we can be confident God is speaking to us.” (Mohler, 49). That does not mean that the Scripture is about us, unless the author intended it to be about us. By the author’s intended meaning and the divinely intended significance of the passage, God is speaking to you and to me today.

But do we hear Him? Are we taking up Scripture with a starting point of saving faith, a basis of finding your life in Christ?

If so, we should see these warnings as good teachings from a good father for us while we live in a world still affected by sin.

We recognize that good parents give warnings. A good father will teach his children not to touch a hot stove or warn them not wander too close to high cliff edges. A good mother enforces for her young children that they are to look both ways before crossing a street. Really, parents keep giving instructions, encouragement, and warnings throughout their children’s lives. If a parent never warned their children, there would be something wrong.

The problem with the wilderness generation that died away is that they did not trust God. He taught them and warned them, but they wouldn’t trust Him. He rescued them out of Egypt. He did marvelous signs and wonders in Egypt before their very eyes and all throughout their journey. He consistently provided for them.

But they were wicked rebels focused first on trying to take care of themselves instead of trusting their Rescuer. When they arrived at the edge of the promised land, they were still trying to operate by their own flesh and not by trust. They still had unbelieving hearts.

When they compared themselves to the large residents of Canaan, they compared their muscles to the muscles of the large residents. When they measured themselves up to them, they concluded that the local residents were stronger and greater than Israel. They did not include God in their calculations. They basically told God that he doesn’t count and basically doesn’t exist as far as they are concerned.

So, they did not reach the final destination which was promised to the people of God because they showed themselves to not to belong to God. Their actions revealed their unbelief.

If you are found to be living without Jesus as your Lord, one day you will die without Jesus as your Lord. It is not good news for you just for Jesus to be Lord. He must be your Lord for that to be good news.

REST theology—We should want to enter into God’s rest. The author of Hebrews will develop more fully later this idea of rest. We are to look back and look forward for the ultimate rest intended for us. In the creation account, we read that God rested on the 7th day. He was not tired. He was inviting us to enjoy Him by resting in Him, by trusting Him within His good creation. We are also to look forward to a new day in which we fully and finally enter into God’s rest in a new creation that cannot be ruined by sin. In order to enter into that rest, you must find your rest in Jesus now. He makes the only way for you to have peace with God by faith.

Do you recognize your need to find rest? Are you content wandering in the wilderness (obvious no)? You show you choose either the wilderness of this world or the rest of God through your active faith or through your active suppression of the truth.

Which reality is a true description of you? Will you examine your heart to see if you truly belong to God?

**Only those who heed will look to  
see if their hearts are faithful  
and find that God sustains us by  
His grace.**

Only those who heed will look and find.

- o Look: we are told to look or watch out. We must look out for our health, our soundness of faith. How is your health meter above your head?
- We must be careful to know the condition of our hearts, whether we are genuinely believers in Christ.

o We have to keep a perpetual watch on our hearts and lives. We are to look and see if we are lining up with the original profession we made of faith in Christ. Are we lining up with Him today? Is your life consistent with the profession you have made in Christ before the church? Have you even made a profession of faith before the church?

What is your proclaimed reality? Is it something the church can affirm in confidence?

o When translators take the words from one language into another, they have to be careful not to try to take in all the possible glosses of a word. The author usually has one intended meaning, so translators have to interpret what meaning is most closely intended, unless the author is clearly doing a word play. There is a word in v. 14 that is difficult to communicate succinctly without losing the rhetorical effect of the warning. Some translations read “reality,” others have the word “confident” or “confidence.”

Hypostasis can refer either to the nature of something or to the intended design of an undertaking. This particular use is set in the context of two vantage points. One vantage point is from God’s perspective. One is from our finite perspective. It also is stated in the context of a journey or duration of time.

These contextual factors make the translation of the word here rather complex. This is why you tend to get two very different translations. Some translations refer to the use of hypostasis here as "reality." Others refer to it as "confidence." The difficulty of having reality as our translation is that it sounds to us like someone could have salvation as a reality and lose it, which we have already seen from Hebrews and elsewhere is not the case. If saved, always saved. The benefit of "reality" as a translation is that if someone is really saved by God, they have come into a new reality and God will keep them.

The difficulty of translating it here as "confidence" is that the passage is calling us to examine whether we truly are changed with new hearts, and false confidence can be the biggest hindrance to such examination. The benefit of that translation is that it reminds us that we are looking at our claims of salvation from a limited perspective. The church can only affirm as credible what it can observe.

The idea, it seems, that the author is trying to communicate is that we see an initial "framework" displayed in a Christian's life when that person comes into salvation. Over time that framework should be built upon and grown so that it withstands the storms of suffering that attempt to dismantle the frames of the design. Only those who endure through life's sufferings with the same confidence we started with in Christ will be shown to have been designed and started by God on this journey of salvation. Those who fall away will be shown as imposters who never had a new reality in Christ. Think the parable houses built on rock vs. sand. The author is telling us that if God is building the house of salvation in your life, your house is on the rock. God who saved you is the One who will sustain you. Those who build on the sand are those who act like they know Christ but are only playing the game of Christianity. They built their own imitation of the house, but they won't stand by faith through to the end.

Is your confidence set on yourself or on the new, firm reality we have in Christ?

- o Βεβαιων (the word in some translations as firm, if we hold firm) in 3:14 is being used syntactically to emphasize not just a holding to your original profession of faith but in a confident manner.

So, are we going to be judged based on how self-confident we are? No, this is not self-infused confidence but confidence based on the Word, our testimony, the evidence of our lives, and the mutual affirmation of the church. The confidence is in the rock of God's sustaining grace.

- o

- o The section has emphasis on having the Christian community be that voice that either affirms and encourages or questions the validity of one's profession. Are you the only one who knows of your profession? Are you the only one who is allowed to examine the details of your life? If so, God is telling us that we will lack that trustworthy confidence. Instead of seeing a status bar of full health, you will only have a big QUESTION Mark over your life.

Baptism-Lord's Supper-Spiritual Care and Correction are intended for the church to affirm and reaffirm the credibility of our testimony. They are part of how God sustains our testimony as a whole church, but they are also used by God to sustain us by His grace. We benefit as we submit to God's Word and designs for the church. Those who look to examine their hearts as prescribed by God will find God's grace sustains them. So then our confidence will not be in our ability to believe really well but in God who calls and keeps.

Just as saving us was an act of grace, so is sustaining us a matter of grace. Spiritual disciplines are God's idea as He calls us to Himself into greater depths of Christlikeness.

- o Vulnerable before the Lord and His Word

We are to submit to Christ, lovingly obeying the Spirit's leading.

- o we are to know and speak into one another's lives as fellow members of a regenerate church—community groups are supposed to keep us from hiding. We are supposed to let our lives be on display with our groups so that we know each other and can rejoice in fellowship with one another and speak correction from the Word when we get disoriented.

o “But I’m too busy or don’t like being in situations where other Christians are able to speak into my life, much less know the details of my life. Are you telling me that I am in danger of being shown to have an unbelieving heart?”

■ I don’t know if you are in danger. Are you?

■ If you can only give an answer based on what you or your family member(s) would answer, then you still have a resident question mark over your head.

o Are you letting others look at your faith status bar so that they can help you see it with confidence?

o You don’t avoid going to your general physician because you might become sick. You go because you are sick. If you go to your general physician and she tells you that you are in imminent danger of a painful death unless you make certain changes, you would be foolish to ignore her warnings.

o Even more important than heeding your general physician’s warning is living within a community of believers who prescribe and apply a grace-infused proclamation of the gospel that exposes our sin and speaks life into the details of our lives.

To apply what Dietrich Bonhoeffer said on this matter: In order to be confident that I am walking with Christ, I need reassurance from the Jesus in my brother’s words even more than the reassurance of the Jesus in my own heart.

Let me read you the fuller quote \*\*\*Bonhoeffer quote\*\*\*

Our confidence must be in God and His sustaining grace if we are to finish the journey toward God’s ultimate rest.

# Only those who look and find will finish the journey to God's full and final rest.

Only those who look and find will finish.

- Only those who look and find will finish the journey to God's full and final rest.

Something interesting happens each time Scripture retells the story of Israel's rebellion to a later generation:

- Moses, when first retelling of the incident, kept referring to the rebellion in the wilderness as if his current hearers were the ones who committed the wrongdoing. (Numbers 14 —>Deut. 7, Ps. 95, and Heb. 3 all attempt to blur the lines a little on who committed the rebellion in the wilderness. All the passages are clear that it was the prior generation, but these warnings are designed to make us question if we are like that false people of God)—It is part of God's sustaining grace to have use continually come back to him and his people in order to see that we belong to Him.

o The call to examine and find grace controlling our hearts with is a perpetual effort throughout the remainder of your life.

o You don't want to be an isolated Christian. Even more so, you don't want to act like you're a Christian among the church but have an unbelieving heart centered on self.

You don't want to act like you are part of the church but in the end be shown to be like Leroy Jenkins.

- Illustrate with funny WoW player, Leroy Jenkins in the advertisement
- When you watch the advertisement, it is rather funny because it's a game.
- But life is not a game and lives and churches are ruined by the Leroy Jenkins perspective that says I will take care of me and do me. You do you. And so churches and individual professors of faith eventually turn from the truth fall victim in the wilderness.

Only those who endure to the end will be shown as having been saved.

- o Jesus's parable of the four soils (Mark 4.1-20), Jesus's warning that only those who endure to the end will have been shown to be saved (Matt 24); and Paul also reminds the Corinthians that their salvation is found to be real only if they hold to the gospel to the end.
- o Like in a video game, anything short of finishing is a failure. But here is the big difference: We are not in a video game. We are playing the game of life and death with our very selves.
- o Where are you in relation to God? How do you know? Is there a big X on your status bar, a check, or a big question mark?
  - You can be confident only by moving forward with Christ by faith with His people

