

## *Study Notes For Hebrews* **(Chapter Three)**

**Hebrews 3:1-2** - *“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house”* (Hebrews 3:1-2). Our study in this article starts off with the word “wherefore.” That ties us backwards to what we studied in the previous chapter about Jesus coming in the flesh. It would do you well to read through that again as you consider what we are going to study from here forward.

The Hebrew writer refers to those whom this letter is addressed to as “holy brethren.” We read that phrase in one other New Testament letter (I Thessalonians 5:27). We know that saints are taught to be holy (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1, Ephesians 1:1-4, Ephesians 4:21-24, I Peter 1:13-16, I Peter 2:5-9, and II Peter 3:10-14). In addition, as these saints are addressed, the faithful are partakers of the heavenly calling. The word translated “partakers” means: “participant, i.e. (as noun) a sharer; by implication, an associate: — fellow, partaker, partner” (Strong’s #3355). We are talking about partakers in the heavenly calling. What does that mean?

If you were to examine the phrase “heavenly calling”, you’d quickly find that this is the only time that English phrase is in the Scriptures. Doing a word study is not much help either. The term translated “heavenly” basically means above the sky or from Heaven (Strong’s # 2032). We know that there is a difference between earthly things and heavenly things (John 3:12, I Corinthians 15:40-54, and Ephesians 1:3). So, what is it that saints partake in while on earth that is from Heaven? What is a calling?

The simple way to define the heavenly calling is to think about the calling and how that ties to things in Heaven. The calling comes through the Gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14). The Gospel gives us the hope of things in Heaven (Colossians 1:5 and Colossians 1:23). To make this even more specific to our study, think about who came from Heaven to give us that hope (John 6:38-51). Now it all comes together in thought. Jesus, who came down from Heaven, is that hope. Later in this chapter we will see these saints were “partakers of Christ” (Hebrews 3:14). Early first century Jewish saints needed to arrive at the full conclusion of their salvation being in Christ and no one else (Acts 4:10-12). Thus, our study continues with the point this writer is making. He wants them to take a step forward and “consider” what is about to be said about Jesus.

They needed to consider Jesus as the Apostle. When most people think of an Apostle, Jesus is not the name that comes to mind. The names Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Paul, etc. are generally the names that come to mind (Matthew 10:1-4 and Romans 1:1). The term translated “Apostle” means: “a delegate; specially, an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (“apostle”) (with miraculous powers): — apostle, messenger, he that is sent” (Strong’s # 652). Jesus was sent with a message from His [our] Father in Heaven (John 3:31-36, John 8:26-28, and John 8:40). When you understand that Jesus was sent from the Father, you get the meaning of Him being called an Apostle. Jesus Himself said this to His Apostles: *“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you”* (John 20:21).

In addition to being called an Apostle, Jesus is referred to as the “High Priest of our profession.” In our previous studies, we briefly talked about Him being our High Priest (Hebrews 2:17-18). This will be something we address more fully as we read through this letter (Hebrews 4:14-7:28). What is “our profession”? The word translated “profession” is also translated “confession” (I Timothy 6:13). That is the term that best describes, to most, what this verse is stating. So, Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of “the way” (John 14:6) which they [we] confess and are partakers of (Colossians 1:12-18). In the first century, “the way” was called heresy by many Jews (Acts 24:14). That made confessing “the way” hard for Jews.

Jesus was faithful to our Heavenly Father. As one sent to do a task, Jesus had the mindset to do what the Father sent Him to do (John 4:34 and John 5:30). Though Jesus was faced with death and He was not looking forward to it, He carried out His Father’s will (Matthew 26:36-46). Notice what Jesus said to the Jews: *“Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him”* (John 8:28-29).

Since the Jews typically thought very highly of Moses (John 5:45), the writer of this letter used that to equate Moses’ obedience to the obedience of Christ. Moses was faithful (Numbers 12:7 and Hebrews 3:5). What these Jewish saints needed to learn was that Jesus and Moses had similar tasks as God’s messengers. While these folks obviously initially obeyed Christ, their generation primarily rejected Him (Luke 17:25). If they could have thought of Jesus as a messenger from God instead of a contradictor of Moses (cf. Acts 6:8-15); maybe then they would have grown, learned more, and been saved.

Jesus was not Moses' replacement. Jesus was what Moses promised would come (Acts 3:11-26; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Whatever conflicts Jewish Christians had, they needed to overcome. Whole congregations ended up erring from the faith because of this struggle (Galatians 1:1-9; 5:1-9). Whether they or us, we must understand that obeying Jesus is equal to obeying God the Father and vice versa (John 5:19-29).

**Hebrews 3:3-4** - While writing about Jesus (Hebrews 3:1-2), the Hebrew writer penned these words: *"For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God"* (Hebrews 3:3-4). As we have discussed in our study of this epistle already, the Jews trusted in Moses (John 5:45). They were openly willing to confess that they were disciples of Moses (John 9:28). When comparing Moses with Jesus, the mindset of many Jews was this: *"We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is"* (John 9:29).

The saints, whom were formerly rooted in the Law of Moses, needed to come to the realization that Jesus was counted worthy of more glory than Moses. In this letter, we have already read about Jesus being crowned with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:9). Later in this epistle we will read this: *"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"* (Hebrews 13:20-21).

In looking back to those whom had initially obeyed the Gospel of Christ, they had to confess Jesus as Lord prior to and after their initial obedience (Romans 10:9-10 and I John 2:23). We can see this in the written account in the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:25-40). To be saints, those to whom this epistle is addressed would had to have done that. These are people who were not denying Jesus as the Lord. Their struggle, through what is implied here and in other texts, is in not giving Jesus greater glory than what they gave Moses. For us, it is as simple as these words penned by Peter: *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen"* (II Peter 3:18). For the first century Jew who had just converted from the Law of Moses, they still esteemed Moses highly. By implication here, they esteemed him too highly.

In tackling this problem, the inspired penman of this letter reasons that the one who builds the house is to be honored more than the house. The house, contextually

speaking, was/is the people of Christ; the church (Hebrews 3:6). This is made really clear in what Paul wrote to Timothy: *“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (I Timothy 3:15). Any faithful Christian knows that the church is the people of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 12:27). Any faithful Christian also knows that the church was built by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:13-18). This context will go on to point out that Moses was a servant in his house (Hebrews 3:5). Jesus on the other hand is the builder of His house. They [we] are His house. For a faithful follower of our Lord this puts things in perspective.

When you think of Christ as the builder and head of His own house, the church, that should correlate into understanding why He should be glorified. Think on these words: *“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence”* (Colossians 1:12-18). The word translated “preeminence” means: “to be first (in rank or influence)” (Strong’s # 4409).

When honestly thinking about giving honor to Moses or Jesus the two should not be comparable. In John’s revelation, He looked into Heaven in a vision and recorded this that he heard and saw: *“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”* (Revelation 5:11-12). This was not said anywhere concerning Moses. Our Father did not exalt Moses to such a place of glory. He did however, place Jesus in a position to receive such honor. Notice: *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth”* (Philippians 2:9-10).

To further the point, the penman of this letter stated that every house has a builder. This should draw the mind of those reading that letter to Creation both of the physical and spiritual things discussed thus far in this letter. Could it be said of Moses

that the Father made all things by Moses (Hebrews 1:1-2)? The obvious answer to that is no! So, why would anyone glorify the servant of a house above the builder? Logically, one should deduce that the servant obeys the master. That was even taught to those involved in slavery in the first century (Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22). The servant who obeyed his master was not worthy of greater glorification for doing what was his duty to do (Luke 17:7-10). It was not Moses who was Master and Lord. That designation belongs to Jesus (John 13:13). The Father created all things by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:9). Moses doesn't measure up to that!

**Hebrews 3:5-6** - As our studies continue in this third chapter, we read this: *"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end"* (Hebrews 3:5-6). A major point in this text is not just Moses as a messenger from God, but his faithful living. We've already, in this context, read about Moses' faithfulness (Hebrews 3:2). Let's take some moments and consider why that matters so much.

Consider how that a messenger of God needs credibility. That credibility comes through one living what he teaches (I Timothy 4:13-16). In this manner, Moses' life was a testimony in itself. Moses was repeatedly called "the servant of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 34:5, Joshua 1:1-2, Joshua 1:13, Joshua 8:31, Joshua 8:33, Joshua 11:12, Joshua 12:6, Joshua 13:8, Joshua 14:7, Joshua 18:7, Joshua 22:2-5, II Kings 18:12, II Chronicles 1:3, and II Chronicles 24:6). Think about what Jesus said when teaching about faithful servants in two different contexts: *"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season... And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath"* (Matthew 24:45 and Luke 12:42-44).

Moses' faithful living was a testimony of the things which were spoken after him. Think about what Moses said when he prophesied of Christ: *"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that*

*whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him*" (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; cf. Acts 3:18-26). Now, Moses was considered higher than a prophet in that God spoke to Moses mouth to mouth (Numbers 12:5-8). The Jews knew that. These things speak to Moses' credibility.

Now, think about the point being made. Moses was faithful. All Jewish Christians would certainly concur with that conclusion. What they needed to do was look at how Moses prophesied of Christ and said they needed to hear Christ (Acts 7:20-37). Later in this epistle, it is stated that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than the riches of Egypt (Hebrews 11:24-27). The Jews trusted Moses (John 5:45). Now, they needed to show the fruit of that trust. It's time to turn fully to Jesus. Moses lived that and taught that!

To the end of turning to Jesus, the point was made that Jesus is more than a servant in the house. He is the Son over His own house. Moses was an order taker. Jesus is the order giver. As members of the body of Christ we should fully understand this language. The house being referenced is the church (I Timothy 3:15). Jesus is the builder of the church (Matthew 16:13-18). Jesus is the head of His body, the church (Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 5:22-33, and Colossians 1:18-24). Jesus is evidently higher than Moses. What discussion is there in that fact? Even in the days of Moses, Jesus was their spiritual Rock (I Corinthians 10:1-4).

Now, the application that is significant to be made is that they [we too] were only the house of the Lord if they held fast till the end. We will see later in this epistle, that those to whom this letter was sent were not growing as they needed to and they needed to make changes (Hebrews 5:12-6:12). There was not going to be some coming, secondary, plan of salvation for those that refused to turn fully to Christ (Hebrews 10:22-38). Since they held Moses in such high admiration, they needed to recall the consequences that came upon those who were not continuously faithful until the end (Numbers 20:1-13 and Deuteronomy 34:1-5). The writer of this letter doesn't go to that point. As we proceed through this letter, the rest of this chapter and into the next we'll be reading about Israel's transgressions in the wilderness.

Whether it is in thinking of the times of old or of Christ Himself, holding fast the confidence firm unto the end is a reoccurring message. What good is it to start, but then turn backwards (Proverbs 26:11 and II Peter 2:20-22)? When our Lord returns to judge the world, Judgment will begin with His house (I Peter 4:17-19). If you read the context of Ephesians 5:22-33, you read that the church is to be glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Ephesians 5:27). Think about why Paul wrote this:

*“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28).*

To the first century Jewish reader of this letter, it was time to let go of their admiration of Moses. Their affection for Moses was standing between them and Christ. For us, we need to be mindful that we are the house of our Lord. Like them then, we are only collectively the house of the Lord IF we are faithful. When we read through letters, such as Revelation that was written to the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 1:1-4, Revelation 1:9-11, and Revelation 22:16), we find that the Lord will withdraw Himself from entire congregations (Revelation 2:1-3:22). We belong to Christ and need to walk accordingly (Colossians 2:6).

**Hebrews 3:7-11** - After the establishment of Christ’ authority over His own house, we read this: *“Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest)”* (Hebrews 3:7-11). These statements, while in a different context, should be familiar to the student of the Old Law and the Psalms. We read very similar wording in Psalms 95:7-11. We will partially readdress this in the next chapter of the Hebrew letter (Hebrews 4:7).

Again, authority is established in the statements forward. Not only is this a quote of a Psalm, but in case someone would miss it, the Holy Ghost is the author of the words being set forth (II Peter 1:20-21). The children of Israel had a long history of hardened hearts, being rebellious, and being stubborn (Exodus 32:7-9, Deuteronomy 31:14-29, II Kings 17:7-14, II Chronicles 30:1-8, II Chronicles 36:11-16, and Nehemiah 9:7-38). Some generations were worse than others (Jeremiah 7:26-28). The problem didn’t cease in the first century either (Acts 7:51-60). Solomon wrote this about those whom have a hardened heart: *“Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief”* (Proverbs 28:14).

The provocation that was written of here and in the ninety-fifth Psalm is accounted of in Numbers 13:1-14:38. The purpose was to humble them and prove them. That was forty years of correction. They were not abandoned by God for those forty years (Deuteronomy 29:1-9). Rather, they saw God’s work for those forty years. Notice: *“All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led*

*thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him” (Deuteronomy 8:1-6).*

Think about God being grieved with the generation the Hebrew writer is referring to. Their grieving God didn't stop as they were sentenced to forty-years in the wilderness. The Psalmist wrote this: *“When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy” (Psalms 78:34-42).*

They refused to know the ways of the Lord (Psalms 147:19-20). Like all whom err from the ways of the Lord, that was their choice and that choice has consequences (Proverbs 1:22-29). Even long after, Israel continued to make the choice to not know the Lord (Jeremiah 9:6 and Hosea 5:4). So, God swore in His wrath that that generation would not enter into the land meant for Israel (Deuteronomy 1:34-35). The lesson therein is that those whom reject the will of God will, at some point, meet His wrath (Romans 1:16-32 and Ephesians 5:6).

As these points are read, let it stand out to us that God has feelings. He sees what they or we do and can be grieved. We first read about God being grieved with the actions of man prior to His flooding of the earth (Genesis 6:1-6). He can be “vexed” by sinful actions (Isaiah 63:10). He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). Consider what Jesus did when He came to the city of Jerusalem: *“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a*



*trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke 19:41-44).*

What God desires, both then and now, is clear. Consider these statements: *“Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways... The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (Psalms 81:13 and II Peter 3:9). If we continue to be God’s faithful children, in Christ Jesus, we are those whom will be delivered from the wrath to come (II Thessalonians 1:6-10). Therefore, BE FAITHFUL!

**Hebrews 3:12** - In our previous study we saw that God wanted these Jewish saints to look backwards to events of old (Hebrews 3:7-11). We know that lessons from the days of old, prior to and under the Law of Moses, are beneficial in learning (Romans 15:4, I Corinthians 10:1-13, and II Timothy 3:15-17). Looking backwards to the times wherein Israel provoked God and was punished for forty years (Numbers 13:1-14:38 and Psalms 95:7-11), the passage we are looking at in this study is about application. Whether they or us today, we don’t look at the errors of those of old and just condemn them. We are supposed to learn from them. The penman of this letter wrote this: *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God”* (Hebrews 3:12).

The emphasis of this passage is clear. “Take heed.” These two English words are translated from the Greek word “βλέπω”. Notice some parts of the definition of this word: “To look at (literally or figuratively): — behold, beware, lie, look (on, to), perceive, regard, see, sight, take heed. To see, discern, of the bodily eye... To see with the mind's eye; to have (the power of) understanding; to discern mentally, observe, perceive, discover, understand; to turn the thoughts or direct the mind to a thing, to consider, contemplate, to look at, to weigh carefully, examine” (Strong’s # 991). There are hundreds of lessons in that partial definition. You can get lost in studies through the 135 times you can find that Greek term in the New Testament. Later in this chapter, we will read, *“So we see...”* (Hebrews 3:19). See, in that passage, is from the same Greek term translated “take heed” in this passage we are studying.

The point being made in Hebrews 3:12 is well summed up in this passage: *“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward”* (II John 1:8). Do you remember the earlier point in this epistle wherein it was asked: *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...”* (Hebrews 2:3)?

Later in this epistle this is stated: *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears”* (Hebrews 12:15-17). As we studied last week, the children of Israel tested the Lord. They took Him for granted. That cost them dearly. God is not to be toyed with. He has and will reach a point wherein He will not extend His mercy (Romans 1:18-32, Hebrews 6:4-8, and Hebrews 10:26-31). For us, as Gentiles in the flesh, consider that if God so punished His chosen people of old (Deuteronomy 7:6-9), what does that mean for us if we test Him (Romans 11:1-24; cf. Acts 17:30)?

These brethren needed to understand that the heart that departs from God is an evil heart of unbelief. Earlier in the context, this was stated concerning God’s people of times past: *“...They do alway err in their heart...”* (Hebrews 3:10). We should know how important it is to have a good and honest heart (Luke 6:43-49, Luke 8:4-15, and Acts 8:5-24). The destruction of the majority of mankind, by way of the flood, came about because the thoughts of the hearts of humanity was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5-13). Good and evil actions are born out of what goes on in our hearts (Matthew 15:1-20, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 6:17, Romans 10:8-10, and Hebrews 10:22).

They had a collective problem in Israel of having evil hearts. That continued to be the problem even into Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 7:23-34, Jeremiah 11:6-8, and Jeremiah 18:5-18). Sadly, at the point wherein Judah was sent into captivity, they had done worse than their fathers with that continual problem of an evil heart (Jeremiah 16:1-13). Because of that evil heart problem, they did not continually believe. When Stephen was stoned by the Jews for teaching the truth, he stated that their problem was a heart problem (Acts 6:8-7:60). Therefore, when we read our current context we should understand that the evil heart of unbelief had not been purged from Israel even into the first century.

When we read that they did not believe, we have to understand something. It was not that they never believed (Exodus 14:31). The problem was that, they didn’t continue in that faith. With our Lord, initial faithfulness is not the goal. The goal has been and will ever be continued faithfulness (John 8:30-32, John 15:9-10, Acts 14:22, Colossians 1:23, and Revelation 2:8-11). Remember, faith without good works is dead (James 2:14-26). Later in this letter, we will consider not drawing back unto perdition (Hebrews 10:38-39). It is a terrible idea to start to obey God and then not to finish faithfully (II Peter 2:20-22). That is why Jesus emphasized counting the cost of

following Him with those that wanted to be His disciples (Luke 9:57-62 and Luke 14:25-33).

When a person or group of people cease to be faithful, that is the point of departure from the living God. The penman here reminds these Jewish saints that they are not serving some false idol. They are serving the true and living God with a hopeful expectation of the life to come (I Thessalonians 1:7-10). Why would anyone want to leave that? The choice was/is very simple. You can choose to keep the ways of the Lord or you can choose not to. If one chooses not to, that is when that person has opted to leave the relationship with God he/she/they once had (Psalms 18:21). For some, they depart from God having never truly committed to that relationship (I John 2:19). Those of old, as we already addressed, were not like that. The realization of the possibility of apostasy has to be something they then and we now guard ourselves against. Remember, God doesn't want to see you fail (Ezekiel 18:20-32).

**Hebrews 3:13** - To avoid departure from the living God, the inspired penman of this letter wrote this: *"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"* (Hebrews 3:13). All faithful saints know that the word of God is able to save our souls (Psalms 19:7-11, Acts 20:32, Romans 1:16, Romans 10:14-17, I Corinthians 15:1-2, I Thessalonians 2:13, II Timothy 3:15-17, and James 1:21-25). However, as I have taught often over the years, faithful brethren are just as important to our salvation as is the word of God. I have long desired that brethren would understand that we are essential to each other for salvation. The word of God teaches that, as we are going to study from this text.

The inspired instruction to exhort one another is later repeated in this letter. Notice: *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:23-25). The Greek word in Hebrews 3:13 and Hebrews 10:25 is "παρακαλέω". It means: "to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation): — beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort(-ation), intreat, pray. To call to one's side, call for, summon; to address, speak to, (call to, call upon), which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.; to admonish, exhort; to beg, entreat, beseech; to strive to appease by entreaty to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort; to receive consolation, be comforted to encourage, strengthen; exhorting and comforting and encouraging; to instruct, teach" (Strong's # 3870).

We know that exhortation, comforting, etc. works through teaching (Acts 2:40, Acts 14:22, I Thessalonians 4:13-18, II Timothy 4:1-5, etc.). We know that we teach one another in various ways (Colossians 3:15-17, I Timothy 4:12, Titus 2:3-6, etc.). You cannot stop there though. Exhortation goes further than that. You can see this in how this same Greek word is translated as “comfort” and “exhort” in the following Scriptures: *“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men”* (I Thessalonians 5:11-14).

We have the responsibility towards each other as brothers and sisters in Christ to watch for each others souls. That responsibility is greatly emphasized in the statement “while it is called To day.” This takes us back in the context to verse 7 and extends into Hebrews 3:15 and Hebrews 4:7. Those statements taking us back to Israel provoking God in the wilderness (Numbers 13:1-14:38) as we have studied already. Had the children of Israel watched for each other, instead of caving in to sin, the outcome would have been different. “To day” is a reminder that tomorrow is not promised (James 4:13-16; cf. Proverbs 27:1).

While the hardening of the heart is something we have already studied in this context, the deceitfulness of sin is a new point in this context. Upon conversion, we as Christians should have put off the old man that was corrupt according to deceitful lusts (Ephesians 4:17-5:11). Remember, in the world, you were deceived by sin (Titus 3:3). Saints should have been awoken (I Corinthians 15:33-34). Yet, we know that when people desire to do that which is sinful, they find ways to justify it (I Samuel 15:1-26, Proverbs 16:2, Proverbs 16:25, Proverbs 21:2, Proverbs 30:12, and Hosea 12:1-14). Except for Caleb and Joshua, the children of Israel did that when the spies gave their false report (Deuteronomy 1:19-46). The children of Israel just did not want to go forward. Deception hardened them.

Over the years I have seen many so-called “brethren” that failed to see the importance of being among faithful saints. So often, they only focused on faithful brethren to worship with. They failed to consider faithful brethren who will help them stay true to the Lord. When Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wrote to the saints in Thessalonica they made this relevant statement: *“As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory”* (I Thessalonians 2:11-12). We need to be like Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus for each other.

Prevention is the key. We should work hard to prevent one another from erring. If prevention fails, before an erring saint is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, we need to be willing to correct one another (II Samuel 12:1-15, Proverbs 27:5-6, Acts 18:24-28, Galatians 6:1-2, James 5:19-20, and Jude 1:22-23). Based on the situation, what ends up happening will vary as we all should know. The effort to save should be the constant that does not change. We are supposed to be a spiritual family (Ephesians 3:15) and show it (John 13:34-35).

After this brief study, you should be able to consider how important brothers and sisters in Christ are to each other. After conversion, it is of great importance that disciples find faithful saints to join (Acts 9:26; cf. I Corinthians 12:14-27). You see that in the great efforts made with the first congregation of Christians on earth to be together (Acts 2:41-6:7). To be referred to as “one of you” (Colossians 4:7-11) is a sense of membership; belonging; family. Furthermore, as we have thought about in this study, being part of a faithful congregation is also about accountability. Brethren, continue to work hard in helping each other be saved!

**Hebrews 3:14** - In a context where the saints were being taught to help one another to prevent the saints from departing from the living God (Hebrews 3:12-13), we find the content of our current study. *“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end”* (Hebrews 3:14). This chapter started off addressing: *“partakers of the heavenly calling”* (Hebrews 3:1). A partaker is: “participant, i.e. (as noun) a sharer; by implication, an associate: — fellow, partaker, partner. Sharing in, partaking; a partner (in a work, office, dignity)” (Strong’s # 3353). In the book of Luke, this same Greek word is translated “partners” (Luke 5:7).

Since the people addressed in this epistle were already Christians, we are not talking about becoming saints. They were therefore already in fellowship with Christ (I John 1:3). The partaking of Christ here is something still to come. Peter wrote something that will help us in our studies here. Consider this: *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed”* (I Peter 5:1). That glory that is to come is further addressed in Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. Notice: *“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:17-18). Once you put that all together, we are reading about saints being partakers with Christ in Heaven.

To join Jesus in eternity saints have to hold the confidence that goes back to the beginning. There are a lot of beginnings revealed in the Scriptures. Since this is relative to their continued obedience, we are left to conclude that this takes them back to their own personal conversions (i.e. I John 2:7 and I John 2:24). The instruction is for them to hold on to the firmness of their foundation. This point is a revisit of an earlier statement in this chapter. Notice: *“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”* (Hebrews 3:6).

Spending eternity in Heaven requires continued faithfulness on the part of saints. This principle is taught in various ways, similarly as to what we are looking at in this passage. Notice some of the wording of this principle outside of this letter: *“As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love... Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God... And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouceable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister”* (John 8:30-32, John 15:9-10, Acts 14:22, Colossians 1:21-23).

In addition to continuing faithfully in the confidence they had since the beginning, the word “stedfast” was used. The point is, you have to be sure, firm. The congregation in Corinth, in a context about the resurrection unto eternal life, was taught this: *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (I Corinthians 15:58). There is no plainer way, that I know of, in which we can think about being stedfast. If these saints were there in the beginning, the first conversions after the death of Christ, they would know exactly what being stedfast is all about (Acts 2:42).

If we look back, as the overall context of Hebrews chapter three does, to the Old Testament; you see Israel was not stedfast. One Psalm says this about Israel of old: *“And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God... For their*

*heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant” (Psalms 78:8; 78:37). These Jewish saints needed to be different than their carnal forefathers.*

The verse we are looking at concludes with, “unto the end.” From the beginning of one’s faith to the end, steadfastness is required. If Heaven will be their/our home, faithfulness to God has to be unto the end of one’s life. That was the message from the beginning of the Gospel through the near end of revelation (Matthew 10:22 and Revelation 2:10). The Parable of the Sower establishes how some begin aright, but for various reasons end up departing from the faith (Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, and Luke 8:1-15). Later in this letter, the saints will be taught to look to Jesus for an example of a faithful finisher (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Brethren, do not reach a point in time wherein you spiritually retire. The work is not done as long as you are alive in this world. Jesus came to this world not only to do His/our Father’s will, but to finish it (John 4:31-34 and John 5:36). Like Jesus, we need to have a finisher’s mentality. As Jesus finished His course and ascended to the Father (Hebrews 1:3), so shall it be for us if we are steadfast unto the end (I Peter 1:3-9). Stay faithful!

**Hebrews 3:15-19** - *“While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:15-19). Much of the above is a review of things we covered already in this chapter (Hebrews 3:7-11). You can find the events the Hebrew writer is referencing in Numbers 13:1-14:38. Since we have already covered the hardened hearts and other points made earlier in this chapter, we will only address a few points in this study.*

It should say something that “To day” is mentioned three times in this chapter (Hebrews 3:7, 3:13, 3:15) and will be readdressed in the next chapter (Hebrews 4:7). Urgency is certainly the message. Whether it was of old, to those saints, or today; the fact has always been that tomorrow is not guaranteed (Proverbs 27:1 and James 4:13-16). For us, we not only need to be prepared to die, but also for the coming of our Lord which could be at any moment (Matthew 24:35-25:46, I Thessalonians 4:13-5:2, and II Peter 3:10-14).

When this penman addresses what happened back when Israel provoked the Lord in the wilderness, he addressed that not all that heard provoked the Lord. The

original account reveals that Joshua and Caleb didn't provoke the Lord to anger (Numbers 32:12). There is a principle there and throughout the word of God that we should not miss. Though times of apostasy are far too frequent and often large in scale, there has always been a remnant of faithful people. We can see that going all the way back to the days of the flood and forward (Genesis 6:1-10, Genesis 8:15-9:1, II Kings 19:20-31, Ezra 9:7-8, Isaiah 1:9, Isaiah 10:20-21, and Romans 11:1-5). The Lord was only grieved with those that had sinned.

When the Hebrew writer wrote of the events earlier in this chapter, the language used was about those that erred in their hearts and did not know the ways of the Lord (Hebrews 3:10). Now, we read the language of those that believed not. The statements we are going to focus on in the remainder of our study here are found in verses eighteen and nineteen. We are going to consider how they could not enter into the promised land because of unbelief. In the original account of the events referenced, we read this: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them"* (Numbers 14:11)? Later, Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to the rock for water as told (Numbers 20:1-13). In that text, we read: *"And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them"* (Numbers 20:12). Let that sink in for a moment.

What is the relationship between faith and obedience in the references the Hebrew writer is using to teach? Can a person believe in the Lord, but not obey Him? Well, we know that the evil spirits believed, confessed the Lord, and even trembled (Mark 1:21-28, Mark 5:1-20, Acts 19:11-20, and James 2:19). However, even knowing the power of God; Satan and his angels rebelled against the Lord and were/will be punished accordingly (Revelation 12:7-9; cf. Luke 10:17-18, II Peter 2:4, and Jude 1:6). So, it is possible for there to be belief and yet disobedience at the same time. That is not just among angels either.

There have been people whom believed, but chose not to obey the Lord. Notice: *"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they*



*should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*" (John 12:37-43).

Had the children of Israel believed, they still may not have obeyed. The question of faith here is about obedient faith. The relationship of faith and obedience exists in that faith needs to lead to obedience. We see this when individuals initially obey the Gospel of Christ (Acts 18:8). In addition to initial obedience of the will of God, there has to be faith that moves one to continue in obedience to the Lord (Revelation 2:10). As we study the word of God thoroughly, we see that faith brings about obedient works (James 2:21-22). That point will be made clearly later in this epistle (Hebrews 10:38-11:40).

As we conclude this chapter, we are not done with the points therein. They continue into the next chapter. The points being made were for them, and now for us, to consider how those of old were lost because they lacked obedient faith. We have to learn from those lessons of old (I Corinthians 10:1-12). Jude wrote: *"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not"* (Jude 1:5). They that despised the promised land did not believe the Lord. As a result, they did not hearken unto Him (Psalms 106:24-26). We would be wise not to repeat their erring ways!