

# Hebrews 4:6-7 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST  
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The Epistle to the Hebrews				
INSTRUCTION Hebrews 1-10:18			EXHORTATION Hebrews 10:19-13:25	
Superior Person of Christ Hebrews 1:1-4:13	Superior Priest in Christ Hebrews 4:14-10:18			Superior Life In Christ Hebrews 10:19-13:25
BETTER THAN PERSON Hebrews 1:1-4:13	BETTER PRIESTHOOD Heb 4:14-7:28	BETTER COVENANT Heb 8:1-13	BETTER SACRIFICE Heb 9:1-10:18	BETTER LIFE
MAJESTY OF CHRIST	MINISTRY OF CHRIST			MINISTERS FOR CHRIST
DOCTRINE			DUTY	
DATE WRITTEN: ca. 64-68AD				

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)  
 (See also [MacArthur's Introduction to Hebrews](#))

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Hebrews 4:6 [Therefore](#), [since](#) it [remains](#) for [some](#) to [enter](#) it, and [those who formerly](#) had [good news preached](#) to them [failed to enter because](#) of [disobedience](#), ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [epeí oun apoleipetai \(3SPPI\) tinas eiselthein \(AAN\) eis auten, kai oi proteron euaggelisthentes \(APPMPN\) ouk eiselthon \(3PAAI\) di' apeitheian.](#)

**Amplified:** Seeing then that the promise remains over [from past times] for some to enter that rest, and that those who formerly were given the good news about it and the opportunity, failed to appropriate it and did not enter because of disobedience ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** Since then it remains that some people must enter into it and since those who in former times had the gospel preached to them did not enter because of their lack of trust ([Westminster Press](#))

**KJV:** Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

**NLT:** So God's rest is there for people to enter. But those who formerly heard the Good News failed to enter because they disobeyed God. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** No, it is clear that some were intended to experience this rest and, since the previous hearers of the message failed to attain to it because they would not believe God, ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Since, therefore, it remains over that certain must enter into it, and they who were first the subjects of the proclamation of the glad tidings did not enter because of disobedience,

**Young's Literal:** Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,

**THEREFORE, SINCE IT REMAINS FOR SOME TO ENTER IT AND THOSE WHO FORMERLY HAD GOOD NEWS PREACHED TO THEM FAILED TO ENTER BECAUSE OF DISOBEDIENCE: epeí oun apoleipetai (3SPPI) tiselthein (AAN) eis auten kai hoi proteron euaggelisthentes (APPMPN) ouk eiselthon (3PAAI) di' apeitheian:**

- He 4:9; 1Corinthians 7:29
- Numbers 14:12,31; Isaiah 65:15; Matthew 21:43; 22:9,10; Luke 14:21, 22, 23, 24; Acts 13:46,47; Acts 28:28
- He 4:2; 3:19; Galatians 3:8
- **Because of disobedience** - "disobedient" [apeitheo] in He 3:18-note parallels "unbelief" [apistia] in He 3:19-note
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Therefore** - Slow down! Don't read past this **term of conclusion** without asking what is being concluded?

**Since** (epeí) seeing or because, links words as dependent ideas.

**Wuest** - The writer now proceeds to show that those under Moses have failed completely of the rest in Canaan through unbelief, that those under Joshua had entered into the temporal, physical, and material rest in Canaan, and that the rest under Joshua was not a complete and final one since God invited Israel into rest during David's time. The words "it remaineth" are the translation of apoleipo. The idea is "remains over from past times." The promise of rest had not been appropriated in the first instance, and in the second instance the character of the rest was not final, so that the promise of rest still holds good. The rest was not provided for nothing. God's provision of a rest implies that some will enter into it. But the appropriation of that rest is still future. Some, therefore, must enter into it. The words "they to whom it was preached" are the translation of one word euaggelizomai, an aorist passive participle. One could translate, "They who were the subjects of the announcement of the good news." The word "unbelief" is the translation of apeitheia, made up of peitho "to persuade" and Alpha privative which makes the compound word mean, "non-persuasive," thus, "disobedient." ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

**William Newell** - The Hebrew Christians addressed in this epistle had been brought up to reverence their national election—just as "Presbyterians" and other sects do their history and "standards." But such reverence blinds men to the facts. The Israelites failed to enter in through unbelief and hardness of heart. God's mercy had spared the nation; but only Caleb and Joshua, as we have seen, entered Canaan! This awful failure would be the very things never mentioned in the talks of their rabbis! ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

**Adam Clarke** - they to whom it was first preached (they to whom the promise was given; they who first received the good tidings; i.e., the Israelites, to whom was given the promise of entering into the rest of Canaan) did not enter in because of their unbelief (He 3:19-note); and the promise still continued to be repeated even in the days of David (**Ed:** We know this from the psalm David wrote - Ps 95); therefore, some other rest must be intended (**Ed:** And as discussed below that rest is in Christ - He is the believer's ultimate Rest). ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

**F B Meyer** notes that...

The word "**remains**" has diverted the thoughts of commentators who have supposed it referred to heaven. There is rest, sweet rest, there. But "**remains**" means "unexhausted, unrealized, by aught which has taken place." The **rest** is for us here and now. "We who have believed do enter into rest." Where is it? In the bosom of Christ: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." It is in ploughing the furrow of daily duty — "Take my yoke; ... and find rest."

**This rest is compatible with great activity.** — He that enters into the Divine rest is not reduced to quietism. On the seventh day the Creator rested from creation; but He works in providence. Jesus, on the seventh day, rested from Calvary; but He pleads in heaven. Cease from your own works, after a similar fashion; abandon your restless planning and striving; by the grace of the Holy Spirit better service will be produced. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

**Since it remains for some** - Oh, how we praise God for these precious words, especially those of us who came to faith in Christ later in life. Amazing grace indeed!

**Spurgeon** - While we are taught that some could not enter in because of unbelief; it is implied in it that believers would enter in. Those who have faith in the divine promise shall enter in. If unbelief shuts men out, then faith is the door of entrance to those who have it. I beg you to grasp the kernel of promise that lies whole and safe within the shell of the threatening. God swore of those unbelieving Jews that they should not enter in, but He had declared that some should enter in; therefore a promise is left which will be fulfilled in those who have faith, and so are the true seed of faithful Abraham. These shall enter in; and certain of them in the text declare that they have done so: "We who have believed enter into rest."

**Remains** (620) (**apoleipo** from **apo** = from + **leipo** = lack, leave, forsake) means literally to leave behind. Paul uses it in the active voice to describe leaving behind of his cloak (2Ti 4:13-note cp the two other uses of the **active** voice - 2 Ti 4:20-note; Titus 1:5-note)

The passive voice as used here in Hebrews means to be reserved or to remain, to be left over.

**Apoleipo** in the present verse conveys the idea that the promise of rest remains over from past times. The **present tense** indicates that it continually **remains**. In other words, even though the promise of rest had not been appropriated (by faith) by most of Israel in the wilderness, the promise of rest still holds good. **Apoleipo** is apparently a technical term in wills in ancient Greek writings.

**A T Robertson** - This left-over promise is not repealed, though not utilized by the Israelites under Moses

**Vincent** - The promise has not been appropriated. It must be appropriated in accordance with God's provision. The rest was not provided for nothing. God's provision of a rest implies and involves that some enter into it. But the appropriation is yet in the future. It remains that some enter in. (Vincent, M. R. Word Studies in the New Testament 4:423)

**Apoleipo** is used 14 times in the **Septuagint (LXX)** (Ex 5:19; 12:10; Lev. 22:30; Jdg. 9:9, 11, 13; 2 Ki. 10:21; 2 Chr. 16:5; Job 11:20; Prov. 2:17; 9:6, 12; 19:27; Isa. 55:7) and 7 times in the NT...

**2 Timothy 4:13** (note) When you come bring the cloak which I **left** at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.

**2 Timothy 4:20** (note) Erastus **remained** at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.

**Titus 1:5** (note) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what **remains**, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,

**Hebrews 4:6** (note) Since therefore it **remains** for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,

**Hebrews 4:9** (note) There **remains** therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

**Hebrews 10:26** (note) For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer **remains** a sacrifice for sins,

**Jude 1:6** And angels who did not keep their own domain, but **abandoned** their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

**It remains** - The rest still remains. It is still to be realized. God had provided a rest (remember in He 4:3 He calls it "My rest") and it was still available for some to enter.

**For some to enter** - We see God's desire for **some to enter** implied even in the parable of the man giving a big dinner (Lk 14:16-

24) where...

the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. (Luke 14:23)

**John MacArthur** explains that "When man lost God's rest, God immediately began a recovery process. Through His Son, Jesus Christ, some would be brought back in. He created man for fellowship with Himself, and His plan would not be thwarted, either by a rebellious archangel or by disbelieving mankind. By divine decree, therefore, there has always been a remnant of believers, even among mostly disbelieving Israel. "In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice" (Ro 11:5). The way of God's rest has always been narrow, and only a few, relative to all of mankind, have ever found it. But some must enter into it, because God's purpose must be fulfilled. By sovereign decree He designed a rest for mankind and some, therefore, are going to enter it.

**Spurgeon** - I remember hearing of a pious minister who was asked to speak one day upon the subject of joy in God. He stood up and said, "I am sorry that I have been requested to speak upon this topic; for the fact is, I am not walking in the light, but I am crying, 'Restore to me the joy of your salvation' (Psa 51:12). I have grieved my heavenly Father, and I am in the dark." He sat down and sobbed; and so did all his brothers. This honest confession did far more good than if he had patched up a tale, and told of some stale experience years before. If you have not entered into rest, do not say that you have. Fictitious experience is dangerous to the forger of it. Experience borrowed from other people is like the borrowed axe, sure to fall into the ditch.

**Good news preached** ([2097](#)) (**euaggelizo/euangelizo** from **euáγγελος** = bringing good news from **eu** = good, well + **aggéllō** = proclaim, tell) means to announce good news, to declare or bring glad tidings.

The Israelites in the wilderness **had good news preached to them**. The question is whether this **good news** was a reference to rest in a place or a Person. In this passage the fact that the possibility of entering this "rest" is still available **for some to enter** would favor a person over a "place". The "rest" by default has to be God's rest available in the Person of the Messiah by grace through faith (see Mt 11:28, 29, 30). And so, the author parallels the failure of the Jews to enter God's rest with the potential failure of his readers to enter that same "rest" by not exercising faith in the Messiah.

The mode of rendering this verse in various translations also supports the preceding conclusion...

([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#)) Seeing then that the promise remains over [from past times] for some to enter that **rest**, and that those who formerly were given the good news about **it** (**Ed note**: About what? About the same rest that was available to the readers of the letter of Hebrews) and the opportunity, failed to appropriate it and did not enter because of disobedience. (**Ed note**: Their disobedience served as evidence of their unbelief, the same truth brought out by comparing Hebrews 3:18, Hebrews 3:19-notes) (Bolding added)

([NLT - Tyndale House](#)) So God's rest is there for people to enter. But those who formerly heard the Good News (**Ed note**: Who is he referring to? In context, Israel in the wilderness) failed to enter (**Ed note**: Failed to enter what? God's rest - see context Hebrews 4:5-note!) because they disobeyed God. (**Comment**: To reiterate - their disobedience was visible evidence that they did not truly trust or belief God.)

([Barclay's paraphrase - Westminster Press](#)) Since then it remains that some people must enter into it **Ed note**: "rest") and since those who in former times had the gospel preached to them did not enter because of their lack of trust

### **The Gospel or Good News in the Old Testament**

**Good news** could refer to the declaration of any kind of good news, but in the New Testament refers, with rare exception, to the **glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God and the salvation which is available by grace through faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God**. In short, the most frequent NT use of **euaggelizo/euangelizo** means to "evangelize" or to preach the gospel.

Twice in Hebrews 4, the author uses similar phrases to refer to the good news...

we have had the **good news preached** to us (He 4:2-note)

those who formerly had the **good news preached** to them (He 4:6-note)

Many find it difficult to believe that either of these references to the **good news** represents the same **gospel** which is preached today. Specifically, they do not interpret this proclamation of good news to Israel in the wilderness as representing the gospel of Christ.

One first needs to ask...

### **Was the gospel (good news) of the Messiah even proclaimed in the Old Testament?**

My experience as a Bible teacher for some 20+ years has been that many Christians, even evangelical and conservative, are not clear on how individuals were saved in the Old Testament, some even believing that salvation was by keeping of the law! However **Scripture fortunately never contradicts itself** and the clear New Testament teaching that men and women are saved by grace through faith is the same teaching that is taught in the Old Testament. The Old Testament saints were saved by believing in the gospel as it was set forth in the promises. New Testament saints like ourselves are saved by believing in the gospel as it was set forth in the fulfillment of the promises in Jesus Christ.

Observe the following New Testament passages and what they teach about the **good news in the Old Testament**...

In the opening to **Romans** we read

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for **the gospel of God**, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures (Ro 1:1, 2-note)

So in his introduction to Romans, Paul explains that the **gospel** was not "**new**" good news, but was the same "**old**" "good news" God had promised in the Old Testament. In other words, the good news did not originate with Paul or even with Jesus' earthly ministry. Paul makes it clear that the good news he teaches is really old news of the Hebrew Scriptures now fulfilled and completed in Jesus Christ. It follows that OT believers were "looking forward" toward the Cross, and NT believers "look backward" toward the Cross, the latter group obviously having a clearer understanding of the gospel than OT believers.

So when did God promise the gospel through His prophets? The amazing answer is that immediately after Adam had sinned and the curse of death fell upon all mankind (Ro 5:12-note) God issued this promise...

I will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman (Eve), And between your seed and her seed (ultimately referring to the Messiah), He (the Messiah) shall bruise you on the head (Ro 16:20-note), and you shall bruise Him on the heel. (**Genesis 3:15**)

**Comment:** Theologians refer to this as the "first Gospel" or "first preaching of the Gospel" [Protevangel or Protevangelium]

In **Galatians Paul** elaborates on this OT gospel writing that...

the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify (declare righteous) the Gentiles by faith, **preached the gospel beforehand** (This is one verb in the Greek = **proeuaggelizomai** from **pro** = before + **euaggelizo/euangelizo** [**word study**] = to preach the good news) to Abraham (at a time before the Jews were known), saying, "ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU." (**Galatians 3:8**)

More than once in the book of Acts, **Luke** records passages that speak of the good news in the Old Testament...

**Acts 10:43** "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name (in context = The Messiah = The Christ) everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness (remission, a sending away from one, a "cancellation of the debt") of sins."

**Acts 26:6** "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers

In 2 Timothy, Paul's last epistle, he credits the teaching of the Old Testament as pivotal in the salvation of Timothy...

2Ti 3:15 (note) and that from childhood you (Timothy) have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

**Comment:** "Sacred writings" refer to the Old Testament Scriptures which Timothy's Jewish mother had exposed him to since he was a young boy. The clear implication is that the good news of salvation by faith in Messiah was taught in the Old Testament.

Writing to the the saints at **Corinth Paul** states the Jews

all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. (1Corinthians 10:3, 4)

Paul speaking of the Jewish fathers in 1Corinthians 10 makes a statement which implies an understanding that the events they experienced, the sacrifices they offered, the ritual they fulfilled, were all designed to teach them truth about Messiah, Who was, to the eyes of faith, their ground of atonement with God, though He had not yet appeared as God incarnate. Of course these same

elements could be experienced mechanically (intellectually), without genuine faith, and were thus meaningless as far as personal salvation was concerned.

Lest there be any doubt about the "antiquity" of the gospel, observe that Paul writes...

**Titus 1:2** (note) in the hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie, promised long ages ago

**Comment:** The phrase **long ages ago** does not refer to ancient times but even before the foundation of the world, because the phrase really means "before time began". To be sure, God reiterated His plan of salvation to godly men such as Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets but the origin of the "good news" was in eternity past, even preceding the bad news of Adam's sin! Amazing grace!

### **Old Testament Gospel**

by William Cowper  
(Olney Hymns)

Israel in ancient days  
Not only had a view  
Of Sinai in a blaze,  
But learn'd the Gospel too;  
The types and figures were a glass,  
In which they saw a Saviour's face.  
The paschal sacrifice  
And blood-besprinkled door,  
Seen with enlighten'd eyes,  
And once applied with power,  
Would teach the need of other blood,  
To reconcile an angry God.  
The Lamb, the Dove, set forth  
His perfect innocence,  
Whose blood of matchless worth  
Should be the soul's defense;  
For He who can for sin atone,  
Must have no failings of His own.  
The scape-goat on his head  
The people's trespass bore,  
And to the desert led,  
Was to be seen no more:  
In him our Surety seem'd to say,  
"Behold, I bear your sins away."  
Dipt in his fellow's blood,  
The living bird went free;  
The type, well understood,

Express'd the sinner's plea;  
Described a guilty soul enlarged,  
And by a Saviour's death discharged.  
  
Jesus, I love to trace,  
Throughout the sacred page,  
The footsteps of Thy grace,  
The same in every age!  
  
Oh grant that I may faithful be  
To clearer light vouchsafed to me!

**Failed to enter** - is more literally not to come into, where the word for not (ou) signifies absolute negation. In absolutely no way did they enter this rest.

**Because of disobedience** - The KJV renders it that they "entered not in because of **unbelief**" (because **disobedience** is the active expression of **unbelief**). Remember (regardless of whether it causes you to grumble) the vital principle that genuine (saving) faith is evidenced by obedience (cf. He 3:18-note; He 4:6-note, He 4:11-note; Lk 6:46, Mt 3:8, Lk 3:8, Acts 26:20). **Don't misunderstand** - Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone. The accompanying works that emanate from an obedient faith only demonstrate that we have exercised and experienced saving faith and become new creatures in Christ (2Co 5:17-note), who now have a new "direction" in life, a new penchant (a strong and continued inclination) for obedience (note this speaks of one's general direction and not perfection nor is it a call to legalism. Instead it describes works which are motivated by the indwelling Spirit Who gives us the power and the desire to please our Father in heaven [cp Php 2:13-note; cp He 13:21-note]).

#### Spurgeon...

There can be no rest to an unbelieving heart (**Ed**: Which is manifest as **disobedience**). If man and miracles could not satisfy Israel, neither would they have been content with the land which flowed with milk and honey. Solemn warning this to all who leave the **way of faith** (**Ed**: And the way of the **obedience** that is a product of that faith) for paths of petulant grumbling and mistrust. The rebels of old could not enter in because of unbelief (**Ed**: cp Unbelief as in He 3:19-note);

let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should even seem to come short of it. (He 4:1-note)

One blessed inference from (Psalm 95-[note](#)) must not be forgotten. It is clear that there is a **rest of God**, and that some must enter into it. The unbelievers could not enter, but "**we which have believed do not enter into rest.**" (He 4:3-note) Let us enjoy it, and praise the Lord for it forever. While we do so, let us "come into his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." (Ps 95:2-[note](#))

**Disobedience** ([543](#)) (**apeitheia** from **a** = without + **peitho** = persuade, the stem peith- = basic meaning of trust) is literally an unwillingness to be persuaded, and thus describes the condition of being unpersuadable. **Apeitheia** denotes intentional and obstinate refusal to believe, acknowledge, or obey. Disbelief. Obstinate rejection of God's will.

In the NT **apeitheia** always speaks of disobedience to God and is often shown as the result of or with the connotation of **unbelief** (apistia). In Ephesians 2:2-note and in Ep 5:6-note unbelievers (unrepentant sinners) are referred to as **sons of disobedience** or those who are the "offspring" (as it were) of disobedience. The active expression of unbelief is manifested in disobedience (cp "**disobedient**" [apeitheo] in He 3:18-note parallels "**unbelief**" [apistia] in He 3:19-note). **Apeitheia** thus denotes a willful unbelief and obstinate opposition to God's will. Note that **apeitheia** is not ignorance but obstinacy. **Apeitheia** is the third of the vices personified as virgins in black in Hermas Similitudes 9.15.3.

**Apeitheia** is pictured in our English words **obstinate** (which means stubborn, perversely adhering to an opinion, purpose, or course in spite of reason, arguments, or persuasion, fixed and unyielding in opinion, attitude, purpose, course of action, self willed, headstrong, difficult to subdue, stubbornly refusing to change one's opinion or chosen course of action) and **obstinacy**, (the quality or state of being difficult to remedy, relieve, or subdue).

#### Leon Morris...

The word **apeitheia** ("disobedience") is always used in the NT of disobeying God, often with the thought of the gospel in mind; so it comes close to the meaning disbelief (cf. He 4:11-note; Ro 11:30-note). Because the first generation had passed the opportunity by, God set another day. The idea that the wilderness generation was finally rejected was one the rabbis found hard to accept. In their writings we find statements such as the following:

"Into this resting-place they will not enter, but they will enter into another resting-place" (Mid Qoheleth 10.20.1).

The rabbis also had a parable of a king who swore in anger that his son would not enter his palace. But when he calmed down, he pulled down his palace and built another, so fulfilling his oath and at the same time retaining his son (ibid.). Thus the rabbis expressed their conviction that somehow those Israelites would be saved. The author, however, has no such reservations about the wilderness generation. They disobeyed God and forfeited their place (**Ed**: I agree with Leon Morris' assessment that not only were the majority of the wilderness generation unable to enter the "rest" in the promised land but also most failed to enter the "rest" in the promised life of the Messiah. In fact the more one studies the OT, the more one is convinced that most of the so-called "chosen people", chose to rebel instead in faith obey Jehovah, the exception of course being the **believing, saved Jewish remnant**). ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary 6-Volume New Testament. Zondervan Publishing](#) or [Pradis = computer version](#))

#### Other words in this word group...

**Apeithes [word study]** (adjective) - 6x in 6v - Luke 1:17; Acts 26:19; Ro 1:30; 2Ti 3:2; Titus 1:16; 3:3. = one who will not be persuaded to obey authority

**Apeitheo [word study]** (verb) - 14x in 14v - John 3:36; Acts 14:2; 19:9; Ro 2:8; 10:21; 11:30, 31; 15:31; Heb 3:18; 11:31; 1Pet 2:8; 3:1, 20; 4:17

#### Ray Stedman observes that...

Delay hardens the heart, especially when we are fully aware that we have heard the voice of God in the inner soul. Every shrug of the shoulder that puts off acting on God's urging for change, every toss of the head that says, "I know I should, but I don't care," every attempt at outward conformity without inner commitment produces a hardening of the heart that makes repentance harder and harder to do. The witness of the Spirit must not be ignored, for the opportunity to believe does not last forever. Playing games with the living God is not only impertinent, but also dangerous.

There is a line, by us unseen,  
That crosses every path.  
The hidden boundary between  
God's patience and His wrath.

**Apeitheia** is not found in the **Septuagint (LXX)** and is used only 7 times in the NT (cp 6 uses of related adjective **apeithes** - Lk 1:17, Acts 26:19 Ro 1:30, 2Ti 3:2, Titus 1:16, 3:3 and 16 uses of **apeitheo** - Jn 3:36, Ac14:2, 17:5, 19:9, Ro2:8, 10:21, 11:30, 31, 15:31 Heb 3:18, 11:31, 1Pe 2:7, 2:8, 3:1, 3:20, 4:17)...

**Romans 11:30** (note) For just as you (Gentiles) once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their (Israel's) **disobedience**

**Romans 11:32** (note) For God has shut up all (Jew and Gentile) in **disobedience** that He might show mercy to all. (Here disobedience is virtually the equivalent of the word **sin**).

**Comment:** Apeitheia in this context describes the fallen condition of all mankind.

**Ephesians 2:2** (note) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of **disobedience**.

**Ephesians 5:6** (note) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of **disobedience**.

**Colossians 3:6** For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of **disobedience** (Note that this use of apeitheia is found only in the Greek Textus Receptus from which the KJV is translated)

**Hebrews 4:6** Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of **disobedience**,



**Hebrews 4:11** (note) Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of **disobedience**.

**Comment:** The Israelites' unbelief was a choice that led to their refusal to obey God by trusting Him (cp **apeitheia**) and the leaders He had appointed. One fruit of unbelief is rebellion either in the form of passive resistance or blatant defiance of His will.

Notice that the failure of the Israelites to enter did not mean God's promise was no longer effective.

**William Newell** - It was not because they were under an imperfect covenant that Israel failed to enter in. It was because their hearts were bent to evil, and thus to unbelief. They did not desire the acquaintance of the God Who had opened the door to the promised land for them. "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt," they said. So at Sinai, when Moses was upon the mountain they had said to Aaron:

"Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him"! (Ex. 32:1).

It is this frightful readiness, yea, eagerness, to do without God—not, indeed, without "religion"—forms, ordinances, and the like; but without the Living God, that is the mark of the Laodicean stage of the Church's history, also—just as of that failing, unbelieving generation of Israel whose "limbs" were "strewn down along in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:17). If people, being what are called "church-members," find themselves able and quite willing to do without the fellowship of God and Jesus Christ His Son day by day; if people do not know what it is to be "led of the Spirit," it may be a dream that they are sons of God! Hell will be filled with false professors, those who deceived themselves.

I tell you, beloved, the story of "the day of the trial in the wilderness," "the provocation," needs to be laid to heart by you and me! Let no one dare to say that the great warnings of Hebrews 3 and 4 do not concern, and directly, every believer today! Shall these Hebrew believers be solemnly warned by recalling their own history of unbelief and failure to enter in, and Gentile believers have no such heart-dangers to be warned of? Where should God go for warnings for all believers, if not to the history of His dealings with the children of men?

You say, "Since Christ died and rose and is gone to Heaven, things are entirely different." We grant at once that sin has been put away, and Christ is indeed in Heaven. But Peter warned those to whom he wrote (the "elect ... of the Dispersion," surely) to make their "calling and election sure"—not to God, but to themselves! "Watch ye," also pleads Paul with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:31); and,

"I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (vss. 29, 30).

"In the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:1–5).

Again, "But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:16–18).

Paul also told Timothy, "The time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine." And (2 Tim. 1:15) "This thou knowest, that all that are in Asia [Ephesus being the center] turned away from me; of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes."\* These turned away, not necessarily from all Christian profession, but at least from that heavenly doctrine, "the mystery," committed to Paul, which is the only truth that establishes and protects saints.

So now there is set before our eyes, in this great book of Hebrews, all the frightful scene of Divine judgments. For Israel (though nationally pardoned in answer to Moses' prayers) turned back into the wilderness, knowing that they would never see the land of milk and honey!

How solemn, then, the warnings of Hebrews 3 and 4! You who say so glibly, "This story of failing to enter into Canaan belongs to the Jews, not to us"—wait! You and I were told, since the Spirit came at Pentecost, to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Have we been? Again,

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13). Are you filled with all joy and peace, abounding in hope, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit? If so, thank God! If not, be still and hearken to the Spirit's searching words concerning Israel's failure to enter in—and learn of what your heart, like theirs, is capable.

God has promised, when He saves national Israel, to “take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26). With us Christians, Christ is to be received into the heart, and dwell there by faith. Mark, that only is a normal Christian condition. Paul is praying for it for the Ephesians, even though they had been “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13). Still “he bows his knees unto the Father ... that He would grant them ... that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith”—a definite thing; only upon condition of which could they be “filled unto all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:14–19).

Be reasonable! To whom could God. speak with unavoidable plainness and warning except to the Hebrews? There is one Body: we know that. Before God since Calvary there is no difference between Jew and Greek; all are sinners. But God, Who has declared all human hearts alike, had already for over 1500 years had direct dealings with Hebrew hearts, even the hearts of those who had received promises, and had had many blessings and deliverances. And the record of it is already written in the Old Testament. It would be pride and self-importance, yea, presumption, for a Gentile professing Christian to say, “Inasmuch as this epistle is addressed to Hebrews, it is not addressed to me.” But have you not seen from this very book of Hebrews that it lifts hearers completely away from earth into a heavenly calling? Just as you, Gentile believer, though a “sinner of the Gentiles,” have by unexpected, limitless grace been sought, and brought into the same calling.

For you or me to pass this epistle over “to the Jews,” is to blind ourselves to, and deny, its whole message. A Hebrew believer, reading it and from the heart believing it, would become as free as Paul, and could say, along with that great apostle (to the Gentile Galatian believers), “I beseech you, brethren, become as I am, for I also am become as ye are.” He was wholly a heavenly man, and no racial or religious distinctions were left in his heart or life!

Frankly speaking, brother, if after reading Hebrews you say, “That epistle is written to the HEBREWS,” and you keep Hebrew believers as a distinct class in your heart, it is you that have missed the great Divinely intended effect of Hebrews. You are the loser. You do not believe that all are one in Christ! Also, you have missed the joy of being enlightened by the blessed Holy Spirit concerning God’s past ways on earth. ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

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**Today in the Word** has the following devotional...

If you saw a notice in the newspaper listing you among potential heirs being sought for a great inheritance, would you make contact with the people placing the ad? Probably so. And if you checked things out and discovered you were a legitimate heir, would you be motivated to show up at the time and place designated to claim your inheritance? You'd be foolish not to go!

That's similar to the situation facing the readers of Hebrews--and us as believers today. God has a promised inheritance for His people called His rest. This rest was offered to the generation that Moses led out of Egypt, but they failed to claim it because they lacked the one prerequisite: faith.

The opening verses of Hebrews 4 continue the writer's train of thought. Having previously described the generation that angered God by its unbelief, he now applies the lessons of that generation to the believers of his day. And, as always, believers in every generation need to learn the same lessons.

The good news of this passage is that God's offer of a rest, a Sabbath rest, still stands. Even though Moses' generation missed it, God's promise remains. His rest has been available since the dawn of creation. God rested from His work (Gen. 2:2) and decided it was such a good idea that He commanded a rest for His creatures.

Notice that God's rest includes the cessation of work (Hebrews 4:10). In God's case, He rested because He was finished with creation--His was a rest of completion and satisfaction.

If we are to enter God's rest today, what work must we cease doing? Part of the answer is that we are to rest from or give up our own efforts to save ourselves, since God's rest includes our salvation. The ""rest"" of salvation is entered only by faith.

The writer urges the Hebrews, ""Make every effort to enter that rest"" (Hebrews 4:11). So the rest must go beyond salvation, since they were already believers. It seems clear that God's rest extends to the entirety of our lives, as we give up our attempts to live the Christian life in our own strength and rest in His promises.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - The principle of Sabbath rest--one day in seven set aside for rest and worship--stands out in this passage. This is a rest God wants us to enjoy today. For us as Christians this special day is the Lord's day. But sadly, for many of us, this day is as hectic and noisy as the rest of the week. If your day of worship seems like every other day, except for church services, make a commitment to turn off the noise, unplug some of the activities, and spend more time in contemplation of God's goodness.

Hebrews 4:7 He **again fixes** a **certain day**, "**Today**," **saying through** David **after so long a time just** as has been said before , "**TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.**" (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** [palin tina orizei](#) (3SPAI) [hemeran, Semeron, en David legon](#) (PAPMSN) [meta tosouton chronon, kathos proeiretai.](#) (3SRPI) [Semeron ean tes phones autou akousete.](#) (2PAAS) [me sklerunete](#) (2PAAS) [tas kardias humon.](#)

**Amplified:** Again He sets a definite day, [a new] Today, [and gives another opportunity of securing that rest] saying through David after so long a time in the words already quoted, Today, if you would hear His voice and when you hear it, do not harden your hearts. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** He again defines a day, when in David, after so long a lapse of time, he says, "Today," just as he had said before, "Today if you will hear my voice do not harden your hearts." ([Westminster Press](#))

**NLT:** So God set another time for entering his place of rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David a long time later in the words already quoted: "Today you must listen to his voice. Don't harden your hearts against him." ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** he proclaims a further opportunity when he says through David, many years later, "today", just as he had said "today" before. 'Today, if you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts'. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** again, a certain day He designates, Today, speaking by means of David after such a long time, just as it has been said before and is still on record, Today, if His voice you will hear, stop hardening your hearts. (

**Young's Literal:** He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

**HE AGAIN FIXES A CERTAIN DAY, "TODAY," SAYING THROUGH DAVID AFTER SO LONG A TIME JUST AS HAS BEEN SAID BEFORE:** [palin tina horizei](#) (3SPAI) [hemeran Semeron en David legon](#) (PAPMSN) [meta tosouton chronon kathos](#) (as) [proeiretai](#) (3SRPI)

- Heb 3:7,8; 2 Samuel 23:1,2; Matthew 22:43; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:29,31; 28:25
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**He again** - used chiefly in two senses, (a) with reference to repeated action; (b) rhetorically, in the sense of "moreover" or "further," indicating a statement to be added in the course of an argument, e.g. Mt 5:33

**Fixes** ([3724](#)) (**horizo**) means to mark out definitely (to mark out the boundaries of) and so to set a limit (think of our English word = **horizon**). In a sense God places a boundary on the **day**. - "He **limited** a certain day, 'Today'". (cp 2Cor 6:1-2)

The meaning is, He gives another opportunity of securing the **rest**, and calls the period in which the opportunity is offered **today**.

**A certain day** - **John MacArthur** comments that "Opportunity for God's rest remains, but it will not remain indefinitely. For each individual it will end before or with death; and for all mankind it will end in the Last Day. The age of grace is not forever. This is why immediate action is a basis of entering God's rest, of being saved." ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press](#))

**Through David** - Attributing the Psalm to David. "Through David" is not in the Hebrew text of Psalm 95:7-8, but the **Septuagint** (**LXX**) inserts the traditional author of the Psalm (in verse 1 "The praise of a Song by David").

**Spurgeon** - We read of this in Psalm 95, where David was urging those to whom he was writing to hear God's voice, and not be like the unbelievers in the wilderness, so that the rest still remained to be entered upon by somebody. Joshua had not given them rest, or else David would not have spoken of entering into rest.

As the OT promise points beyond Moses to Christ, so the rest of God in Genesis 2:2 points beyond Joshua and David (Hebrews 4:7-8) to the final rest to which believers in Christ will attain if they hold fast to their faith.

Remember that although the larger context of chapter 4 reflects the sad events of Israel's disobedience as recorded in Numbers 13-14, the specific Scriptural reference the writer refers to now is from Psalms 95:7-11, which relates to Israel's experience at Meribah.

**After so long a time** - The time between Joshua and David. This phrase is not part of the original psalm, but refers to the fact that God, approximately five hundred years after His offer of rest to the generation under Moses, makes another offer of rest. This offer is accompanied by the warning that the people should not harden their hearts.

The **Nelson Study Bible** adds that..

By merely entering the Promised Land, the Israelites had not entered God's rest, for David (years after Joshua had led the Israelites into the land) had warned his generation to not harden their hearts, so that they could enter God's rest (see Hebrews 3:7-11). Like David, the author of Hebrews called the present generation to respond to God today (see **note** Hebrews 3:13), which is the day of repentance. ([Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Said before (Proeipon)** only used here. The **perfect tense** pictures past completed action with continuing effect or result and thus means "as it has before been said, and is still on record".

### TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS: Semeron ean tes phones autou akousete (2PAAS)

- Heb 3:7,15; Ps 95:7
- 1Kings 6:1; Acts 13:20, 21, 22, 23
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Remember that in the NAS, verses in capital letters indicate a direct quotation from the Old Testament in this case of Ps 95:7.

**Today** - **What does he mean by "today"?** Today meant "now" in the time of his readers and that is what it means by way of application in our time - Now is the day of salvation! (cp 2Co 6:2) The only way the rest is through a hardened, disbelieving heart that shows its unbelief in a person's disobedience. The writer's tone speaks of a sense of urgency. Today is now and now is the day of salvation!

**Leon Morris** - The voice of God still called because the invitation of "Today" was still available 500 years after Joshua took the children of the first generation into Israel. The author has already used the quotation in 3:7 ff.. But its point this time is the word "Today." There is still a day of opportunity, even though the fate of the wilderness generation stands as an impressive witness to the possibility of spiritual disaster

**Utley** observes that...

Psalm 95:7-11 has been quoted several times in the context of chapters 3 and 4. Each time a different part of the OT passage is emphasized (like a sermon):

1. **Hebrews 3:7-11** emphasizes "do not harden your hearts" of Ps. 95:8;
2. **Hebrews 3:15** emphasizes "when they provoked Me" of Ps. 95:9;
3. **Hebrews 4:3, 5** emphasizes "they shall not enter My rest" of Ps. 95:11;
4. **Hebrews 4:7** emphasizes "today" of Ps. 95:7. ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

In **Psalm 95 David** wrote...

For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. **Today, if you would hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness (Psalm 95:7-8)**

**Spurgeon** commenting on **Psalm 95:7b** writes...

what is this warning which follows? Alas, it was sorrowfully needed by the Lord's ancient people, and is not one whir the less required by ourselves. The favoured nation grew deaf to their Lord's command, and **proved not to be truly His sheep**, of whom it is written, "My sheep hear my voice": Will this turn out to be our character also? God forbid.

**To day if ye will hear his voice.** Dreadful "if." Many would not hear, they put off the claims of love, and provoked their God." Today," in the hour of grace, in the day of mercy, we are tried as to whether we have an ear for the voice of our Creator. Nothing is said of tomorrow, "He limiteth a certain day," He presses for immediate attention, for our own sakes he asks instantaneous obedience. Shall we yield it? The Holy Ghost

saith "Today," will we grieve him by delay?

If we put of repentance another day, we have a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in. --W. Mason

He that hath promised pardon on our repentance hath not promised to preserve our lives till we repent. -- Francis Quarles

And yet, as S. Bernard tells us, there is no difficulty at all in hearing it; on the contrary, the difficulty is to stop our ears effectually against it, so clear is it in enunciation, so constant in appeal. Yet there are many who do not hear, from divers causes; because they are far off; because they are deaf; because they sleep; because they turn their heads aside; because they stop their ears; because they hurry away to avoid hearing; because they are dead; all of them topics of various forms and degrees of unbelief. --Bernard and Hugo Cardinalis, in Neale and Littledale.

It will be as difficult, nay, more difficult, to come to Christ tomorrow, than it is today: therefore today hear his voice, and harden not your heart. Break the ice now, and by faith venture upon your present duty, wherever it lies; do what you are now called to. You will never know how easy the yoke of Christ is, till it is bound about your necks, nor how light his burden is, till you have taken it up. While you judge of holiness at a distance, as a thing without you and contrary to you, you will never like it. Come a little nearer to it; do but take it in, actually engage in it, and you will find religion carries meat in its mouth; it is of a reviving, nourishing, strengthening nature. It brings that along with it, that enables the soul cheerfully to go through with it. --Thomas Cole (1627-1697) in the "Morning Exercises

## **HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS**

### **Verse 7: The entreaty of the Holy Ghost.**

1 The special voice -- "the Holy Ghost saith" --

- a). In Scripture.
- b). In the hearts of his people.
- c). In the awakened.
- d). By his deeds of grace.

2 A special duty, "hear his voice", instructing, commanding, inviting, promising, threatening.

3 A special time -- "today." While God speaks, after so long a time, in the day of grace, now, in your present state.

4 The special danger -- "harden not your hearts", by indifference, unbelief, asking for signs, presumption, worldly pleasures, etc.

### **Verse 7. Sinners entreated to hear God's voice. "Hear his voice", because --**

1. Life is short and uncertain;
  2. You cannot properly or lawfully promise to give what is not your own;
  3. If you defer, though but till tomorrow, you must harden your hearts;
  4. There is great reason to fear that, if you defer it today, you will never commence;
  5. After a time God ceases to strive with sinners;
  6. There is nothing irksome or disagreeable in a religious life, that you should wish to defer its commencement.
- Edward Payson.

**Verse 7. The Difference of Times with respect to Religion.** -- Upon a spiritual account there is great difference of time. To make this out, I will shew you,

1. That sooner and later are not alike, in respect of eternity.
2. That times of ignorance and of knowledge are not alike.
3. That before and after voluntary commission of known iniquity, are not alike.
4. That before and after contracted naughty habits, are not alike.
5. That the time of God's gracious and particular visitation and the time when God withdraws his gracious

presence and assistance, are not alike.

6. The flourishing time of our health and strength, and the hour of sickness, weakness, and approach of death, are not alike.

7. Now and hereafter, present and future, this world and the world to come, are not alike. --Benjamin Whichcot.

Verse 7. This supposition, If ye will hear, and the consequence inferred thereupon, harden not your hearts, doth evidently demonstrate that a right hearing will prevent hardness of heart; especially hearing of Christ's voice, that is, the gospel. It is the gospel that maketh and keepeth a soft heart. --William Gouge.

**Spurgeon** commenting on **Psalm 95:8** writes...

Verse 8. Harden not your heart. If ye will hear, learn to fear also. The sea and the land obey him, do not prove more obstinate than they!

"Yield to his love who round you now  
The bands of a man would east."

We cannot soften our hearts, but we can harden them, and the consequences will be fatal. Today is too good a day to be profaned by the hardening of our hearts against our own mercies. While mercy reigns let not obduracy rebel. "As in the provocations, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (or, "like Meribah, like the day of Massah in the wilderness"). Be not wilfully, wantonly, repeatedly, obstinately rebellious. Let the example of that unhappy generation serve as a beacon to you; do not repeat the offences which have already more than enough provoked the Lord. God remembers men's sins, and the more memorably so when they are committed by a favoured people, against frequent warnings, in defiance of terrible judgments, and in the midst of superlative mercies; such sins write their record in marble. Reader, this verse is for you, for you even if you can say, "He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture." Do not seek to turn aside the edge of the warning; thou hast good need of it, give good heed to it.

Verse 8. Harden not your hearts. An old man, one day taking a child on his knee, entreated him to seek God now -- to pray to him, and to love him; when the child, looking up at him, asked, "But why do not you seek God?" The old man, deeply affected, answered, "I would, child; but my heart is hard -- my heart is hard." -- Arvine's Anecdotes.

Verse 8. Harden not your heart. -- Heart is ascribed to reasonable creatures, to signify sometimes the whole soul, and sometimes the several faculties appertaining to the soul.

1. It is frequently put for the whole soul, and that for the most part when it is set alone; as where it is said, "Serve the Lord with all your heart", 1 Samuel 7:20.

2. For that principal part of the soul which is called the mind or understanding. "I gave my heart to know wisdom", Ecclesiastes 1:17. In this respect darkness and blindness are attributed to the heart, Ephesians 6:18, Romans 1:21.

3. For the will: as when heart and soul are joined together, the two essential faculties of the soul are meant, namely, the mind and will: soul put for the mind, heart for the will "Serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul", Deuteronomy 6:13.

4. For the memory. "I have hid thy word in my heart", saith the prophet, Psalms 119:11. The memory is that faculty wherein matters are laid up and hid.

5. For the conscience. It is said that "David's heart smote him", that is, his conscience, 1 Samuel 24:5 2 Samuel 24:10. Thus is heart taken, 1 John 3:20-21.

6. For the affections: as where it is said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind", Matthew 22:37. By the mind is meant the understanding faculty; by the soul, the will; by the heart, the affections.

Here in this text the heart is put for the whole soul, even for mind, will, and affections. For blindness of mind, stubbornness of will, and stupidity of affections go together. -- William Gouge.

Verse 8. Let us not fail to notice, that while it is the flock who speak in Psalms 95:1-7, it is the Shepherd who takes up their expostulating words, and urges them home himself at Psalms 95:8, to the end, using the argument which by the Holy Ghost is addressed to us also in Hebrews 3:7-19. There is something very powerful in this expostulation, when connected with the circumstances that give rise to it. In themselves, the

burst of adoring love, and the full out pouring of affection in Psalms 95:1-7 are irresistibly persuasive; but when (Psalms 95:8) the voice of the Lord himself is heard (such a voice, using terms of vehement entreaty!) we cannot imagine expostulation carried further. Unbelief alone could resist this voice; blind, malignant unbelief alone could repel The flock, and then the Shepherd, inviting men now to enter the fold. --Andrew A. Bonar.

**Hear (akouo)** in the present context means to hear with attention, to hear effectually so as to perform or grant what is spoken

**Hearing** is a key word in Hebrews...

**Hebrews 2:1** (note) For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what **we have heard**, lest we drift away from it.

**Hebrews 3:7** (note) Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU **HEAR** HIS VOICE, 8 DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS

**Hebrews 3:15** (note) while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU **HEAR** HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

**Hebrews 4:7** (note) He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU **HEAR** HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

**Hebrews 5:9** (note) And having been made perfect, He became to all those who **obey** (literally "**hear under**", listen attentively **hupakouo** = hupo + akouo) Him the source of eternal salvation,

**Hebrews 5:11** (note) Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of **hearing**.

**Hebrews 11:8** (note) By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed (literally "**hear under**", listen attentively **hupakouo** = hupo + akouo) by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

**Do not harden** - This is a prohibition for the hearers (plural verb) to not **willfully** make the choice (active voice = the hearers' **volitional** choice) to not yield to God's invitation to enter His rest. This is one of those NT statements inspired by the Spirit of God that makes you say "**Woe!**"

**Harden** ([4645](#)) (**skleruno** from **skleros** = dry, hard, rough) means first to make dry, stiff or hard. In the active **skleruno** means to harden and in the passive sense, to grow hard.

The NT uses are only figurative (metaphorical) and mean to cause one to become unyielding, obstinate or stubborn (carried on in an unyielding or persistent manner)

**Skleruno** was a medical technical term (first attested by Hippocrates) in Greek writings describing something becoming hardened or thickened. Our English word "hardening" of the arteries is known as "arteriosclerosis". This is a serious, potentially fatal physical condition, but here in Hebrews the danger is even more ominous, for spiritual hardening can lead to eternal death and damnation of one's soul, not just loss of their physical life!

From the uses of **skleruno** in **Exodus** (see below), one observes two important aspects of hardening: (1) Man can repeatedly harden his heart, until finally God does the hardening, with the implication that the latter is irrevocable. (2) One effect when one's heart is hardened is not listening to God.

Regarding **Romans 9:18** note that in Exodus Moses speaks of **God's hardening Pharaoh's heart** (see Exodus 4:21; 7:3, 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10) and also records that **Pharaoh hardened his own heart** (see this "self produced" hardening in Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34), the obstinate ruler confirming God's act of hardening by his own act of hardening. Such passages point out the humanly irreconcilable tension between God's sovereignty and man's free will. A similar tension is found with Esau who was rejected before he was born (and who later chose to reject the inheritance for a pot of stew). Judas Iscariot, in a similar way, before he was born, was appointed to betray Christ (Acts 1:16; John 6:70,71). Both Esau and Judas chose to follow sin and unbelief.

In Acts 19:9 **skleruno** is linked with unbelief and disobedience.

Remember the axiom that

The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay.

If your heart is not melted in faith, it will be hardened in unbelief!

**Skleruno** is used 6 times in the NT...

**Acts 19:9** But when some were becoming **hardened** (passive voice) and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. (**Comment:** Some of the Jews in Ephesus were "hardened" at Paul's preaching in the synagogue. Notice that here we see hardening associated with disobedience to the Truth.)

**Romans 9:18** (note) So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He **hardens** (active voice) whom He desires. (**Comment:** This verse speaks of God's judicial action. He causes this person's hardening, which is manifest by them becoming stubborn or refusing to listen. Compare a parallel truth in **Romans 1** where God gave the intractable sinners over to the power of Sin - see **notes** Romans 1:24; 26; 28).

**Hebrews 3:8** (note) Do not **harden** (active voice) your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, (**Comment:** Don't make a volitional choice or a choice of your will to harden your heart).

**Hebrews 3:13** (note) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you **be hardened** (passive voice) by the deceitfulness of sin. (**Comment:** The deception of sin - promises one thing, gives another - produces hardening of one's heart.) (**See Related Discussion: The Deceitfulness of Sin**)

**Hebrews 3:15** (note) while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not **harden** (active voice) your hearts, as when they provoked Me." (**Comment:** Don't make a volitional choice or a choice of your will to harden your heart).

**Hebrews 4:7** He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not **harden** (active voice) your hearts." (**Comment:** Don't make a volitional choice or a choice of your will to harden your heart).

**Skleruno** is used 33 times in the Septuagint (LXX) (Gen. 49:7; Exod. 4:21; 7:3, 22; 8:19; 9:12, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 13:15; 14:4, 8, 17; Deut. 2:30; 10:16; Jdg. 4:24; 2 Sam. 19:43; 2 Ki. 2:10; 17:14; 2 Chr. 10:4; 30:8; 36:13; Neh. 9:16f, 29; Ps. 90:6; 95:8; Isa. 63:17; Jer. 7:26; 17:23; 19:15)

**Exodus 7:3** "But I will **harden** (Lxx = skleruno in the active voice = by a judicial act God will harden it) Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

**Exodus 7:22** But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart **was hardened** (Lxx = skleruno in the passive voice) , and **he did not listen** to them, as the LORD had said. (Other uses of **skleruno** are in the passive voice - Ex 8:19).

Regarding the numerous uses of **skleruno** (and **skleros**) in the **LXX**, **NIDNTT** writes that...

Hardening, according to the OT understanding, results from the fact that men persist in shutting themselves to God's call and command. A state then arises in which a man is no longer able to hear and in which he is irretrievably enslaved. Alternatively, God makes the hardening final, so that the people affected by it cannot escape from it. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

As noted above, **hardening of one's heart** is associated with not listening to God and not obeying God. Listening to God and obeying Him are matters of the will. So is hardening the heart as indicated by the use of the **active voice** in Hebrews 3:8, Hebrews 3:13, Hebrews 3:15, as Israel did. In first Timothy Paul warns that our hearts, or consciences, can become seared and insensitive, as skin does when it is badly burned and scars over. The scar tissue that replaces the skin has very little feeling. Something very much like this happens to a conscience that is repeatedly disregarded. **Today** lasts only as long as there is opportunity to decide and as long as the conscience is sensitive to God. When a person's **today** is over, it is too late. His heart gets harder every time he says "No" to the good news of Jesus. When the heart is soft, the conscience sensitive and the intellect is convinced about Christ, that is the time to decide, while the heart is still pliable and responsive.

The danger that the writer of Hebrews is warning about is that one will eventually become spiritually hardened, stubborn, and insensitive and the gospel will no longer have any appeal.

**Illustration of the significance of the word "Today"**- In his earlier ministry D. L. Moody often would end his message with, "Go home and think about what I've said." One night in Chicago he told the people to do this and to come back the next night ready to make a decision. That night the Chicago fire broke out, and some who had been in his congregation died. That was the last time he told anyone to think over the claims of Christ and make a decision later. No one knows if he will have a tomorrow in which to decide. Today signifies the present time of grace. Men today, as in the time of Moody and in the time of Hebrews and in the time of David



and in the time of Moses, never know how long that time of grace for them will be.

**William Newell - Today if ye shall hear His voice, Harden not your hearts.** The argument for the present, peculiar attention of the Hebrew believers is, that Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts, was said in David so long a time afterward: that is, after the sad events of the wilderness forty years. So that, if the Spirit took the wilderness overthrow as a warning for those who should read David's writings hundreds of years later—with how much force should the warning come to believers today—a warning of the treachery of the human heart. We have been examining the “rest” of God, together with such facts as that Joshua\* did not give them rest, or God (vs. 8) would not have spoken afterward of another day. Now let us take moral warning of this oft repeated word, TODAY. The writer himself testifies, as he has heard others testify, to the losing of years by the failure to hear some Spirit-spoken “TODAY” message, either from the Word directly, or from some faithful messenger, or from what we call “circumstances.” May I speak humbly and reverently here? But is not God's long-suffering from the very manner of His dealing with Israel, even now saying again and again, “Today”? This is a word of patient, tender Divine love. Creatures of the dust that we are, we should spring to obey the voice of the heavenly glory! Some, indeed, have, like Israel, “fallen,” “hardened by the deceitfulness of sin”—yea, by that self-deceiving which makes promises to self of a future hearkening or obedience, while living in present disobedience. I would to God that both you and I and all of us could read Hebrews 3 to 6 with that testimony in our own hearts that God gave to His servant Moses, “My servant Moses—is faithful in all My house”!

We are more and more impressed that the book of Hebrews stands between that salvation set forth in Romans, and the judgment depicted in the book of The Revelation. For the Judge in The Revelation is our blessed Lord Himself (Rev. 1). He stands as Priest-Judge among the seven assemblies called by His name on earth. Then, Chapter 5, He takes the seven-sealed book of universal judgment from God's hand in Heaven. And finally, He comes in Person in the Great Day of the wrath of God the Almighty (Rev. 19). God does not want us in the judgment, my friend. Judgment is His “strange work” (Isa. 28:21). And He says, “As I live ... I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth ... Wherefore turn yourselves and live”! (Ezek. 33:11; 18:32). Do you remember our Saviour's great words in John 5:24? “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.” And His great closing public message in John 12:47: “If any man hear My sayings and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” (Christ will be Judge at last! But now: “The Father hath given Me a commandment what I should say ... and His commandment is Life Eternal”!) Therefore after those blessed epistles, that proclaim the way of Salvation, and before The Revelation, the book of judgment, comes this wonderful exhortation-epistle of Hebrews. In it God sets His Son and His priestly work before us, and the heavenly worship which alone is real, and in which God yearns that we should join. No wonder, therefore, if He warns us again and again of the treachery of the human heart. “Let us take heed,” as we are exhorted in Hebrews—for eternity is at stake! ([Hebrews Commentary](#))