

Hebrews 3:12-14; Luke 8:4-15

January 28, 2024

Hebrews 3:12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Luke 8:4 And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, ⁵ "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶ And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. ⁸ And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

⁹ And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰ he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' ¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. ¹⁴ And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵ As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

CONNECTION

- What are some activities in life that require consistent work and effort to achieve success?
- What areas of your spiritual life do you find it hard to remain consistently faithful in?

In Hebrews 3:12-14, the writer warned believers that it is possible for someone to start down the path of following Jesus but then not finish. Such people develop "an evil, unbelieving heart" (v. 12). The solution is for believers to keep each other accountable. The ultimate goal is that every believer will cling to the truth of the gospel to the very end.

OBSERVATION

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 3:12-14.

- Have you ever had an accountability partner or group? If so, how did that person or group help you grow spiritually?
- What warning does this passage give to believers? What safeguards do these verses mention to keep this from happening in our lives?

A dark warning is placed at the beginning of this passage: "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). The phrase "fall away" is a translation of the Greek word *apostēnai*, where we get the English word apostasy. It means to withdraw from or rebel against something to which you were once loyal.

It is easy to read the stories in the Old Testament and think, "That could never happen to me." Yet the writers of the New Testament warned us that the mistakes made by the Israelites are the same mistakes we can make today. (See also 1 Cor. 10:1-6 where Paul warned Christians not to rebel like the Israelites in the wilderness.) Like the ancient Israelites, we too can rebel against God and fall away if we're not careful.

- **What role can this LifeGroup play in helping each other remain firm in our faith/confidence until the end?**

What can cause us to rebel against God? In verse 13, the biblical writer explained the process: our hearts are hardened when we are deceived by the false promises of sin. One solution to this is mutual accountability and encouragement with other Christians. "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13).

The Greek word translated exhort carries the idea of both comfort and calling someone to a higher standard. As we confess our sins to other Christians and ask them to hold us accountable, there should be words of comfort and encouragement spoken to give us peace. Yet these accountability conversations should also include reminders of the high calling God has given us. The apostle Paul was a master at this. His letters were filled with both words of encouragement and exhortations to obey and serve God more (see Romans 12:1). That is how we should exhort one another!

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 8:4-18.

- **What is the main message that Jesus is teaching in this parable?**
- **What are the different things mentioned in this parable that keep believers from growing spiritually?**

In this parable we see the seeds not producing growth because of the deception and temptations of Satan, the difficulties and sufferings of this world, and the cares and pleasures that this world has to offer. We must always be on guard against these things.

- **What are the consistent practices of those who bear fruit in verse 15? How can we help each other in this area?**

Those who bear fruit in these verses are those who consistently hear the Word of God and hold fast to it more each day. The voice of God in our lives through His Word must be louder than the temptations of Satan and cares of this world or we will fall away and not produce the fruit in our lives that we are called to produce. Our spiritual growth and perseverance is dependent upon continually exposing ourselves to God's Word and strengthening on our faith in what it says. We must continue to share and study God's Word together. This is the most important thing we could do for each other.

RESPONSE

- **What is an area in your spiritual growth that you need some accountability in?**
- **Personal Reflection: Do you take God's warnings seriously? Is there any sin in your life you are refusing to give up? Are you running the risk of developing a sinful, unbelieving heart? If you answered yes, what steps do you need to take to develop accountability in your life?**

Leaders, this last question is important for everyone in your group, including yourself, to reflect upon. Please provide them time to reflect and/or make yourself and the pastors at Chets Creek church available to speak with anyone who needs someone to discuss these types of things with.

Hebrews 3:12-14

Heb. 3:12–13 Drawing on several key words in Psalm 95, Hebrews warns against allowing the unbelief of a **hardened**, sinful **heart** to cause one to **fall away** (Gk. *apostēnai*, “turn away from, forsake, apostatize from”; cf. Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 4:1). His counter to this danger is both to encourage personal commitment (**take care**) and to call on the church to walk together in mutual encouragement (exhort one another). **as long as it is called “today.”** From the perspective of God’s saving plans for world history, the church lives in a special moment in which the Lord has come, spoken, and gone, and believers await his return—faith is called for in this hour, and mutual exhortation sustains and strengthens faith.

Heb. 3:14 For we have come to share in Christ. The evidence of the Christian truly partaking of Christ’s salvation involves endurance **to the end**. The condition (**if indeed**) has been understood in various ways. Some have argued that the condition (“if”) indicates that true Christians can lose their salvation. Scripture is clear, however, that true believers cannot lose their salvation, as evidenced, e.g., by John 10:27–29 (“no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand”), Eph. 1:4 (“he chose us in him before the foundation of the world”), and many other Scripture passages (e.g., John 6:39–40; Rom. 8:35, 38–39; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:3–5). Hebrews 3:14 should be understood in connection with v. 13, as is indicated by the linking word “for” (Gk. *gar*). That is, v. 14 is linked to the exhortation not to become hardened (in unbelief and sin). Thus the logic of the argument is that those who are hardened or who become hardened (v. 13) give outward *evidence* that they are not (and never have been) genuine believers who “share in Christ,” because genuine believers do not become hardened; instead they *persevere*—that is, they **hold on to their original confidence** firm to the end. Of course, Scripture also encourages believers to pray for and seek to bring back any who have fallen away (James 5:20; 1 John 5:16), in the hope that they will turn back. Still, this passage should be viewed as a sober warning—intended as a *means* that God uses to keep Christians resolved in faith and obedient until the end. The ongoing experience of perseverance results in “confidence” and assurance that one does in fact “share in Christ.” This verse then provides a grave warning to everyone who claims to be saved—that is, to examine oneself carefully to be sure that one is in fact a genuine believer, because if there is no evidence of perseverance in faith and obedience, then there is real reason to doubt that such a person has ever been saved.

Luke 8:4-15

Luke 8:4–8 The Parable of the Sower. Although referred to as the parable of the sower, the sower is the least important component and is only referred to once (v. 5; cf. its omission in v. 11 with Mark 4:14). The focus, rather, is on the various kinds of soil on which the sower sows his seed. **parable**. See notes on Matt. 13:3; Mark 4:2. **For birds of the air**, cf. Luke 9:58; 13:19; Acts 10:12; 11:6. Some fell on the **rock** lying beneath a thin layer of soil. **ears to hear** (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9; Luke 14:35). An exhortation to understand and heed the parable. **hundredfold**. See note on Mark 4:8.

Luke 8:9–15 The Purpose of the Parables. In his explanation of the parable of the sower, Jesus also explains that parables blind those who have resisted God’s revelation while helping those who have believed it.

Luke 8:10 To you it has been given to know. For the disciples’ unique access to Jesus’ teachings, cf. 10:21–22; 12:32; 22:29. **secrets**. See also note on Matt. 13:10–11. So that indicates the purpose of Jesus’ teaching in parables (cf. notes on Matt. 13:12–13; Mark 4:12).

Luke 8:12 The seeds **along the path** (through the field) represent one group of hearers. **So that they may not believe and be saved** assumes that faith is the means of salvation.

Luke 8:13 The second group of hearers **receive** the word with **joy** and **believe**. A few interpreters think this is saving faith because these people “believe,” and though they “fall away” (from fellowship?), this is not an ultimate rejection of Christ. But it is more likely that this is temporary, merely intellectual “faith” (cf. James 2:17) that is not saving faith, for these plants **have no root** (see Mark 4:17), they bear no fruit, and they do not

persevere but last only **for a while** (on perseverance, see notes on John 6:40; Rom. 8:29; 8:30; 2 Tim. 2:11–13; Jude 21).

Luke 8:14 The third kind of soil, containing **thorns**, describes those who initially embrace the message (start on their way) but do not persevere to maturity and so fail to produce mature **fruit** because of the **cares** (cf. 12:22–34; 21:34), **riches** (6:24; 12:15; 16:1–13), and **pleasures of life**.

Luke 8:15 The fourth group hears with an **honest and good heart**. They **hold it fast and bear** (“much,” cf. v. 8) **fruit**. With **patience** can also be translated “with perseverance” (cf. 21:19; Acts 14:22), showing that fruit-bearing in God’s kingdom often requires much work before significant results are seen.