

Unlocking The Mystery & Treasure Of Our Inheritance

#32 Warning! The Perils Of A Hard Heart

MASSAH [Test] & MERIBAH [Quarrel]: THE HARDNESS OF MAN'S HEART

EX. 17:2-3, 7 Therefore, the people Contended with Moses, and said, GIVE US water that we may drink. And Moses said to them, Why do you find fault with me? Why do you tempt the Lord *and* try His patience. But the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst? And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

The Israelites were not just momentarily "out of sorts."

Unfortunately, this incident is typical of Israel's stubbornness and rebellion against God.

Deut. 9:6-8, 24 Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.

Remember this and never forget how you provoked the Lord your God to anger in the desert. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord. At Horeb you aroused the Lord's wrath so that He was angry enough to destroy you. You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day I knew you.

NATURE OF THIS SIN:

1. Israel's actions at Massah and Meribah constituted TESTING GOD. [Ex. 17:2, 7; Ps. 106:14] Deut. 6:16 Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

- a. Israel's lack of water was by divine design.
- b. "I tested you at the waters of Meribah" (Ps. 81:7; Deut. 8:2, 16).
- c. Testing revealed the sinful condition of their hearts.
- d. Testing surfaced their willfulness and waywardness and revealed that God was always blessing them on the basis of His grace, not their works.
- e. God has every right to test His creatures, and His tests are always for our good.

Deut. 8:16 Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

Key Point: No creature has the right to "put God to the test."

- a. To do so is to demand God prove Himself in a way that we dictate.
- b. God had proven Himself more than sufficiently in the miracles of the exodus.
- c. Israel did not lack evidence; they only lacked faith.

Consider: If God were among them, then let Him prove it by giving them water, then and there. How arrogant! How inappropriate! How sinful!

The creature demands that the Creator jump through his hoops.

2. Israel's demand God prove His presence among them betrayed their Lack Of Faith in Him.

a. Scriptures indicate Israel's actions at Massah and Meribah betray hearts which are hardened and unbelieving:

Ps. 95:8-9 "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did."

Ps. 106:24b-25 They did not believe His promise.

They grumbled in their tents and did not obey the Lord.

Heb. 3:12, 19 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an Evil Heart Of Unbelief, in departing from the living God. So we see that they could not enter in because of Unbelief.

b. The Jewish religious leaders persistently challenged Jesus to prove Himself by giving them a sign [Matt. 12:38], a challenge which He refused to take up.

Matt. 12:39 An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign;

Consider: Trust which Does Not "Put God To The Test."

Dan. 3:17-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow in worship to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, even when threatened with being thrown into a blazing furnace. "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up"

Lesson: Faith Trusts In God, Even When The Result Appears To Be Fatal.

The Israelites should have learned by now that God had promised to deliver them, not to destroy them, and that He had always protected them and provided for their needs, no matter how bleak things looked. Yet when they ran out of water, they doubted the presence of God and demanded a miracle so God may prove Himself to them once again.

3. Israel's actions at Massah & Meribah reveal their LACK OF PATIENCE.

Ps. 106:13-15 They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel:

But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.

And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

a. In every instance where Israel lacked food or water, they acted prematurely.

b. Unbelief is often hasty; faith is patient and endures.

4. Israel's response at Massah and Meribah were ACTS OF DISOBEDIENCE.

a. 1st instance of thirst at Marah [Ex. 15:22-26] was an occasion for God to TEST His people, as well as TEACH them: "If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you."

b. When Israel tested God at Massah and Meribah, God viewed their actions as Disobedience:

Ps. 78:56 "But they put God to the test and rebelled against the Most High; they did not keep His statutes."

Ps. 106:24 "They grumbled in their tents and did not obey the Lord." [Heb. 3:16, 18; 4:6, 11].

Question: What command of God did the Israelites disobey at Massah and Meribah?

The only commandments given so far have been general (15:26) and those which specifically related to the harvesting and use of manna in chapter 16.

The key to the answer: 17:1 "The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of sin, traveling from place to place *as the Lord commanded.*" The guidance which God gave the Israelites was BY COMMAND. When Israel resisted Moses and insisted he had led them into the wilderness to die of thirst, they rebelled against the guidance of God, thus they disobeyed His command. Conclusion: Grumbling is disobedience!

5. At Massah & Meribah, Israel DOUBTED GOD'S PRESENCE among them.

- a. It is an incredible thing they could doubt God's presence and power among them.
- b. God had evidenced His presence and power so many times in very recent days: in the plagues, passing through the Red Sea, provision of food and water.
- c. His presence was manifested in the cloud.
- d. Nevertheless, the absence of water = absence of God.

Truth: There is a difference between listening and really hearing. God's Word implies it takes more than physical ears to HEAR the voice of God. It requires a receptive heart.

Ps. 95:7b-8 Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did.

Heb. 3:7 Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the day of rebellion

Background: 1. Written to "second generation believers" who were won to Christ by those who had known Jesus during His earthly ministry.

2. Heb. 3:1 holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling- True Believers; not mere professor

a. Heb. 4:14 Told them they had a High Priest in Heaven - This is to a believer!

b. Heb. 6:4 Told them they had been made "partakers of the Holy Spirit."

3. Heb. 10:32-34; 12:4; 13:13-14 had been persecuted because of their faith

4. Heb. 6:10 - had faithfully ministered to the needs of others who had suffered

5. Heb. 13:9 were being SEDUCED by teachers of false doctrine

6. Heb. 13:7 They were in DANGER of forgetting the true Word their 1st leaders, now dead, had taught them.

7. Heb. 5:12ff - Tragedy: They were at a standstill spiritually and in danger of going backward.

8. Heb. 10:25 Some had even forsaken the regular worship services.

9. Heb. 6:1 Many were not making any spiritual progress.

Truth: If you do not move forward spiritually, you will go backward!

There is no permanent standing still!

Question Posed To Them: "How can you even consider going back into your former religion?"

Evaluate what you have in Jesus Christ. He is better than anything you had under the law. When you realize ALL you have in and through Jesus Christ, you have NO DESIRE for anything else.

10. Heb. 1:1-2 God ...has spoken to us in His Son.

11. Heb. 12:25 "See to it that You Do Not Refuse Him who is speaking."

- a. God wanted His people to have their feet on the solid foundation of faith.
- b. He did not want them to trust in things that would vanish.

The writer [Paul] lays out 5 warnings or exhortations to encourage us to Trust God and Heed His Word. He also points out the sad spiritual consequences that result if we do not.

Warning #1 - Heb. 2:1-4 Drifting From The Word - A Result of NEGLECT

1. LISTEN with a receptive heart to God's Word and truly HEAR it, or I will start to drift.
2. Don't neglect your great salvation! Neglect of His Word always leads to drifting!
3. In Heb. 6:19, an anchor is used to show how confident we can be in the promise of God.

Consider: More spiritual problems are caused by neglect.

We neglect God's Word, prayer, worship and spiritual growth. Result = drifting

Note: The anchor does not move! We do!

[Illustration of Robert Robinson]

Truth: It is easy to drift with the current, but it is difficult to return against the stream.

4. As I drift from the Word, I begin to DOUBT the Word.
5. Faith comes by HEARING the Word of God. [Rom. 10:17]

Warning #2 Heb. 3:7-4:13 Doubt & Disbelief Of The Word - Neglect Leads To A HARD HEART

Today if ye will hear his voice,

⁸ Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

⁹ When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

¹⁰ Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said,

They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

¹¹ So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

¹² Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

I Cor. 10:6, 9-11 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

- a. Because the Israelites went backward in unbelief instead of forward by faith, they missed their inheritance and died in the wilderness.
- b. Many Christians do not CLAIM and POSSESS their spiritual inheritance in Christ. They doubt God's Word and live in restless unbelief. They are saved but do not enjoy the fullness of God's blessing. They are "out of Egypt," but not in Canaan.
- c. Israel experienced God's power, miracles and provisions, but it did not benefit them spiritually. They HARDENED their hearts against God!
- d. Hardened = callused, repeated irritations

It is the end product of an evil heart no longer sensitive to the wooing of the Holy Spirit.

It begins with an attitude, manifests itself in action and culminates in God having to judge.

Question: If faith comes by hearing the Word of God, then why does it not come to all who hear it?

Heb. 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them:

but the word preached did not profit them, Not Being Mixed With Faith in them that heard it.

Truth: The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart.

e. All but Moses, Joshua and Caleb erred in their hearts. = wandered from God & His Word

f. 3:12 Evil heart of unbelief = did not believe God would give them this victory

Note: They had seen God perform great signs in Egypt, yet doubted He was adequate for the challenge of Canaan.

Key Point: The Sin Of Israel is stated in Heb. 3:12 - "Departing From The Living God."

a. Greek word = apostasy = A Standing Off From A Former Belief

b. Israel DEPARTED from the living God by refusing God's will for their lives and stubbornly wanting to go their own way back to Egypt.

c. God did not permit them to return to Egypt. He disciplined them in the wilderness

d. The context: Believers who doubt God's Word and rebel against Him do not miss heaven, but they miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today and must suffer the chastening of God.

Example: Lot chose the wrong world and became the father of the enemies of God's people.

[Gen. 19:30-38] Lot became the friend of the world - and LOST EVERYTHING.

II Pet. 2:7-8 Delivered Lot...that righteous man

I Cor. 3:15 Lot was saved, yet so as by fire," and LOST HIS REWARD.

Warning #3 Heb. 5:11-6:20 Dullness Toward The Word - Hard Heart Leads to Sluggishness

a. Spiritual Sluggishness produces a lazy listener - "dull of hearing"

Warning #4 Heb. 10:26-39 Despising The Word - Sluggishness Leads To Willfulness

a. A despiseful attitude leads to the extent I willfully disobey God

Warning #5 Heb. 12:14-29 Defying The Word - Willfulness Leads To Refusing To Hear

a. Defiant attitude - We almost "dare" God to do anything about it.

Remember: These 5 exhortations [warnings] are addressed to people who are truly born again.

Purpose: Pay Close Attention To God's Word

Consider: NO passage "threatens" the born again readers they might lose their salvation!

a. Heb. 12:9 "Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?"

b. The inference: If we do not submit and continue to defy God's Word, we might die.

c. I John 5:16 There is a sin unto death.

Heb. 12:25 "See to it that You Do Not Refuse Him who is speaking."

a. God wanted His people to have their feet on the solid foundation of faith.

b. He did not want them to trust in things that would vanish.

c. Many are placing their trust in the "scaffolding" and not on the solid foundation.

d. Many Christian's confidence is in money, building, programs and passing material things.

e. As God is continuing to "Shake" society, the scaffolding will fall away. God's people will discover: My only confidence must be in the Word of God.

f. Heb. 13:9 God wants our hearts to be "established [8x in Hebrews] with grace." = be solidly grounded, to stand firm on your feet. It carries the idea of strength, reliability, confirmation, permanence.

Key Messages:

#1 Heb. 2:2 God's Word is steadfast.

#2 Heb. 6:19 The hope we have in Him is steadfast and the anchor that holds.

#3 Heb. 12:28 You can be secure while everything around you is falling apart.

We have a "kingdom which cannot be moved."

A Focus On Our Future

1. Heb. 2:5 The writer says he is speaking about "the world to come," a time when believers will reign with Christ.

2. Heb. 1:2 Jesus Christ is "heir of all things."

3. Heb. 9:15 We share the "promise of eternal inheritance."

4. Heb. 11:10-16, 26 We are to be looking for that future city of God as did the patriarchs.

a. 11:13 - "Strangers and pilgrims on the earth"

b. He is shaking this world - Turn loose from the things of this world - Focus: World To Come

5. We have been promised a future reward. The decisions we make today will determine the rewards of tomorrow.

a. Our decisions should be motivated by the expectation of receiving rewards.

Heb. 11:10 Abraham obeyed God because "he looked for a city."

Heb. 11:26 Moses forsook the treasures and the pleasures of Egypt because "he had respect unto the recompense of reward."

Heb. 11:31, 35 These great men and women of faith "lived in the future tense."

Heb. 12:2 Jesus...for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame."

Tozer: "Every man must choose his world."

Exhortation: "Don't live for what the world will promise you today.

Live for what God has promised you in the future. Walk by faith, not by sight."

Jim Elliot: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."