

Hebrews 3:7-19

“The Danger of a Hard Heart”

May 22nd 2011

Introduction –

- Ø Can you think of a story, a great story that ended so differently that you wished or pictured

I think of the first time I saw Old Yeller as a kid Picture of Old Yeller, preferably a movie poster – what a great movie, at first, this kid gets a dog, kid doesn't want the dog, but the dog grows on him, the dog loves him and he loves his dog, his dog saves him from all kinds of trouble – and then the dog get rabbis – and then, no why is the boy walking to the cage with that gun, he's not going to, tell me Mom, tell me they find a cure for Old Yeller, tell me Old Yeller miraculous gets over rabbis, tell me the dog gets out and kills everyone, tell me anything but the boy has to shoot his own dog - What kind of ending of that!

Well I really think the story of the Exodus generation is the same

- Ø There was the Passover – 430 years of bondage was over

- God brings about 10 plagues on Egypt, the last one the death of the first born
- The people leave, actually plundering the Egyptian

- Ø There was he pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night

- How cool that God would lead them like that
- Remind them He was with them as they could see that

- Ø There was that little event at the Red Sea

- Pharaoh decides, I didn't want to let the people go, and comes after they Jewish people

There they are, back up against the Red Sea

Ø the mountains to the left and right, the sea behind them, and Pharaoh's army bearing down

- and what does God do when there was no way of escape - He made a way where there wasn't a way - He parted the Red Sea

And then God calls them to Mount Sinai and gave them the 10 commandments

Ø The very law of God written with the finger of God

- And if that wasn't enough
- When they were thirsty God gave them water from a rock
- When they were hungry, God gave them bread on the ground every morning in the form of manna
- And when they wanted meat, quail came down from heaven and they would just take them from the sky
- What a generation this was that saw all of this

So when they come to Kadesh Barnea in Numbers chapter 14, when they come to the very edge of the promise land

Ø you expect them to hear the report of the spies saying – there are giants in the land, and walled cities and iron chariots

- but we serve the God who freed us from Egypt, fed us in the wilderness, parted the Red Sea
- Lets go – and they lived happily ever after

But you Bible students know that was not what happened

Ø they come to the edge of the promise land

- they hear the report of the spies
- the land is a good land, just as God said

Ø But there are giants in the land, walled cities and iron chariots and we are like grasshoppers in their sights

Then they loose their collective minds and say, we need new leaders, lets go back to Egypt

Ø then God judges them and the entire Exodus Generation except for Joshua and Caleb die in the wilderness

Ø you are kidding me

- what in the world is going on
- this is not what I expected
- this is not how the story was suppose to end,

The Writer of Hebrews is concerned that this same tragic end is going to come upon these Hebrew believers

Ø their conversions to Christ would have been amazing just like the Exodus generation

- and you would think, that these Hebrew believers who knew the scriptures better than anyone, would join their brother Paul and change the world for Jesus

Ø But as we have been studying this book, Pastor Rob has been teaching us that is not what was happening

- But some believers because of trials, because of things not working out the way that they had hoped
- Some were wanting to go back into Judaism

And so the author of Hebrews is writing this book to show them the superiority of Jesus to everything in and around Judaism

Ø from angels in chapters one and two

Ø to Moses as we learn about last week

- and now He is warning them to learn from the great great great grandparents who died in the wilderness, going backward and not forward

And to address his concern the author of Hebrews does what many a pastor has done to communicate his point

- Ø he quotes of passage of scripture that sums up his feeling
 - the author quotes here in Hebrews 3, Psalm 95:7-11
 - it was a passage every Jew would have known well, for its opening line was the call to worship every Sabbath evening
- Ø “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” – those words were repeated Sabbath after Sabbath as a warning to carefully hear God’s voice
 - and the author brings this up to his Hebrew audience to remind them
 - to remind them of the events of Numbers 13-14, to remind them the consequences of a hardened heart toward God and how to avoid that same fate themselves
 - so lets dig into the text and discover ourselves what happened on that fateful day in Kadesh Barnea, how it applied to what the Jews in the first century were facing and how it applies to us today!
- Ø If you are taking notes today I want us to notice 2 things

Hebrews 3:7-19

#1 – How the Exodus Generation Developed a Hard Heart? – Hebrews 3:7-11,16-19 - Read Heb 3:7-11

Again the context is Numbers 13-14, and the whole early wilderness experience

- Ø the Jewish people have watched God free them from Egypt
 - take them through the Red Sea and the wilderness

They have had the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night

- Ø God has fed them every day supernaturally
 - God has given them water from a rock
 - And now they are on the verge of the promise land

But the 12 spies who were sent into the land come back with a troubling report

- Ø the land is truly good just as God said
 - but there are giants in the land
 - there are walled cities and iron chariots
 - And we were like grasshoppers in their sights

But two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb say – we are going to do something outlandish – we are going to do something crazy

- Ø we are going to take God at His word
 - We are going to believe that if God has promised, He is able to deliver
 - We are going to believe that what we have witnessed in the wilderness, God faithfulness is evidence that He is going to be faithful in the future - We are going to take God at His Word!

Now this is how we should respond to things in our lives

- Ø How does God say in His Word to respond to this situation, this emotion, this temptation, this circumstance
 - If you struggle with coveting – you need to listen to the Word of God – find verses in the Bible that deal with the subject, memorize them and bring out the sword when you are tempted
 - If you struggle with lust – you need to listen to the Word of God – find verses in the Bible that deal with the subject, memorize them and bring out the sword when you are tempted

If you struggle with fear – you need to listen to the Word of God – find verses in the Bible that deal with the subject, memorize them and bring out the sword when you are tempted

Ø If you are in a difficult marriage – you need to listen to the Word of God – find verses in the Bible that deal with the subject, memorize them and bring out the sword when you are tempted

- Call me naive if you will – but I believe there is power in the Word of God
- There is power in listening to what He says, with a soft heart and letting the power of the Word shape my thoughts and there by my actions
- That is how we should respond

But the children did not take God at His Word

Ø they said, the Lord can't do it

- and what an incredible insult to God
- you have taken us out of Egypt, you split the red sea, you fed us in the wilderness
- but we don't know if you can deal with the giants, the iron chariots
- we don't know if you can deal with the fortified cities

Ø But this is what God does

- He deals with these things in your life
- But they would not take God at His Word, they would not believe
- And God was rightly offended

So enter Moses, who says oh Lord, you know these cats, they always behave this way, forgive them

Lord, forgive them

Ø and the Lord said, I will, I do, I forgive them, I will always love them but – they are not going into the promise land, they will die in the wilderness

- what????

Listen friends, We decide we are not going to go God's ways

- Ø We decide we are not going to obey
 - And then we repent and God forgives and God loves us, and we are good for eternity
 - Because you are going to be in heaven not because of what you have done, but because of what He did
- Ø So God forgives, He still loves us and is with us
 - But listen, listen, forgiveness doesn't fix everything
 - It deals with eternal consequences, but sometimes there are temporary ramifications that we still have to walk through
- Ø And for the Exodus generation that meant, they were not going into the promise land
 - They were going to die in the wilderness
 - and this is huge lesson for us to learn

There are going to some serious decisions in your life and you need to slow down and seek the Lord

- Ø you need to pray and seek and believe His Word
 - the children of Israel would have avoided so much pain
 - If they just would have taken God at His Word
- Ø But they did not, because they had gotten into a pattern of saying "No" to God
 - And the more we say "No" to God, the harder our heart becomes

The trouble of Kadesh Barnea was preceded by 9 other times in the wilderness they had said "No" to God's direction

- Ø When the author quotes Psalm 95 it refers to one of those 9 events
 - The key words are the words 'rebellion' and 'testing'

The renderings here come from the Greek Septuagint but the Hebrew behind the word “rebellion” is Meribah and behind “testing” is Massah

- Ø It refers to the time Israel wanted water in Exodus chapter 17
 - Again God has been leading them from Egypt, toward the promise land
 - And God was doing radical things – but at the first sign of testing, the children of Israel began to complain
- Ø We are thirsty – we need water
 - And when things aren't right, the first thing people do is turn on the leadership, oh that pastor!!!
 - Listen I know of what I speak
 - And if it is not dealt with in our hearts, it moves on from people that we blame for our trouble, to God Himself
 - Listen to what Exodus 17 says...

“So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?” – Exodus 17:7

- Ø How could they even say that
 - They could look at see the pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night
 - They had just eaten that morning, Manna the miraculously appeared on the ground
 - How could they say, “Is the Lord even among us or not”
- Ø How could they say it – there hearts were getting hard
 - And test after test, there hearts got harder as they said no to God, over and over again

But each time, God forgave them

Ø and not just forgave them, but actually removed the temporary consequences of their sin

- and instead of learning and letting the love of God soften their hearts
- they kept saying “No” to God, wrongly thinking this is the way it would always be

Ø But eventually their hard heart would catch up with them and do them in

- Their pattern of saying no to God kept building and building

This happened over and over again in the first short wilderness time for the nation, on the journey from Egypt to Kadesh Barnea

Ø they had been cultivating a heart that said “No” – and by the time of Numbers 13-14, this time they weren’t seeing things clearly

- they didn’t think they were insane in this moment
- It seemed reasonable to them, they had their reasons – they didn’t think they were wrong
- But it was against what God said
- And it was an offense to God
- And it cost this generation dearly

Verses 16-19 are three rhetorical questions that help summarize the lesson for us (This whole section on one animated slide)

Question #1, verse 16, – The point = they started well but finished poorly

Ø The Exodus generation saw so much and yet these are the ones who died in the wilderness

- Bible history and Christian history is full of examples
- But it doesn’t have to be the fate for you

Question #2, verse 17 – The point = the problem was their unbelief

- Ø Our not taking God at His word will cost us
 - We are struggle with unbelief at time, but instead we should pray Lord I believe, help my unbelief
 - the Lord's past faithfulness is the assurance of future faithfulness

Question #3, verse 18-19 – The point – lack of faith, leads to bad actions

- Ø you think of Abraham
 - who felt he needed to help God
 - and he made a mess
 - our lack of faith will do the same thing

Cultivating a heart that says “Yes” to God is the best way to keep you out of messes

- Ø not trials, because God will lead us into battle
 - not trials but messes of life
- Ø a heart that says “No” to God always leads to pain
 - and to counteract that, we must cultivate a heart that says “Yes” to God

And we need to hear this precious church because maybe your Kadesh Barnea is coming

- Ø And you have been cultivating a heart that says “No” to God
 - You are in trouble
 - So how can we do this??

Hebrews 3:7-19

#1 – How the Exodus Generation Developed a Hard Heart? – Hebrews 3:7-11,16-19

#2 – How we can avoid having a hard heart? – Hebrews 3:12-15 – read Hebrews 3:12-15

How can we avoid a hard heart?

#1 – Guard your heart – Hebrews 3:12

- Ø The author of Hebrews says, “Take care” –
 - the idea of this phrase is to look, to pay special attention to this, consider this and take note
- Ø what are we to take care of, take note of???
 - “The spiritual condition of our hearts”

You can not be just hap hazard in taking care of your heart – why?

- Ø we live in a world that antichrist, and if you are not careful it will suck you in the opposite direction

Now understand, I think most us know when the Bible the talks about the heart, it is not talking about the muscle that pumps blood under your sternum

- Ø When the Bible refers to the heart – it means the center of your will, intellect and emotion

This is the part of you God speaks to and directs

- Ø it is the place from where the action flow

Jesus said – “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” – Mark 7:21-23

- Ø If your heart is sensitive to God, then your life will bear good fruit
 - You want to keep that place yielded and sensitive to the Word of God
 - Because it will direct your life
 - King Solomon who knew this well wrote..

Proverbs 4:23, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the issues of life” –

- Ø in the Hebrew it begins with the phrase “above all else’

In other words, if you are going to do anything right, do this right

Ø Take care of your heart – take care of what goes into your heart

- This is to be purposeful, not lackadaisical, purposefully taking care of our heart

We can't let down our guards, not in this culture

Ø How do we guard our hearts

- We read our Bible and pray – of course
- But I think in this post Christian culture, we need to really pray through what our eyes behold, what our ears hear
- I think that is a huge component of it

Ø Because these Antichrist messages are bombarding us from every direction

- Whatever you allow in, is going to influence your life
- As your heart goes, there your life goes, there your actions follow

Ø And I speak to you as a pastor that loves you

- I have taken some heat on this over the past few months

We love to champion our liberty, as a pastor that loves you, I need to ask, but how is your liberty working out practically

Ø where is your liberty directing your heart and by it your life

- and I mean us to really pray that in as people who love God, who love one another, and who want the absolute best for our lives
- How is your liberty working out practically

You understand what I mean?

Ø I am not saying that God loves you because of what you do or do not do

I am not saying it makes you anymore or less of Christian and loved by God

Ø But I am saying, things effect you, things will either harden or soften your heart

- And Hebrews 3 is warning to us to guard our hearts, above all else
- If there one thing you do right – guard your heart

How can we avoid a hard heart?

#1 – Guard your heart – Hebrews 3:12

#2 - Exhort one another and allow yourself to be exhorted – Hebrews 3:13

In verse 12 we are told we have a responsibility to watch over our hearts individually

Ø but then in verse 13, and I love this, we are also told that we have a communal responsibility to do this as well

- that is part of what it means to be in the church
- we are connected to one another in relationship, we care for one another, and we challenge one another
- and why it is important?

Because sin is deceitful

Ø that means it is working for your destruction without you realizing what is happening?

- It never appears as it really is
- If sin ever did, we would run from it

Ø But it is deceptive and therefore we tolerate it

- Sometimes we can't even see it
- And we need one another

Ø And sin effects all of us

- It effects our kids, our spouse, our church family
- And I believe God allowed it to be that way so we would realize our need for one another

This is something that is sometimes lost in our culture

Ø the flesh hates to be accountable

- we want to do it our way!
- But that is an antichristian message

Hebrews says we are to “Exhort” one another

Ø and that word “Exhort” means to come along side someone and to have someone come along side you

- that does not mean the Word is calling you to be a sin sniffer
- that is pharisaical and it is wrong

Ø But we are to be mutually accountable – to have a few guys, guys who you allow to speak truth into your life

- To have few gals, gals, who will be honest with you
- It is something you need to intentionally and purposely enter into
- Hey will you speak truth into my life

I realize some of you have issues, from your childhood where you were abused or berated and so when someone points something out in your life you react harshly

Ø Friends in love, I need to say you need to let go of that, because it is sin, it is pride and it is destructive to your life

- We need people to help us see what we can not

Because Sin is deceitful

Ø it is deceitful in its approach

- the Bible says Satan can transform himself into a angel of light

Sin is deceitful in its end

Ø if we really saw sin for what it was, we would run

- but we don't see it, so we engage

The picture of Sampson at the end of his life, blind, bonded and grinding away

Ø but sin never puts itself out there like that

- and to overcome it
- we need to watch what goes in – the Word, not the world
- we need to be accountable to one another
- because sin is deceitful and effects all of us

Instead we need to stay in the Word of God, and the community of God, the church

Ø we need the Word to say – wait a second

Ø we need each other to say – what is going on – what you are doing is unbiblical

- and finally this morning...

How can we avoid a hard heart?

#1 – Guard your heart – Hebrews 3:12

#2 - Exhort one another and allow yourself to be exhorted – Hebrews 3:13

#3 – Be partakers of Christ – Hebrews 3:14-15

To partake means “share life with, to go along with” Christ

Ø you see if we are spiritually strong, letting our heart stay soft it happens by cultivating a love relationship with Jesus Christ, that is how you have victory

- Moses can't take you in, the law, - I'm not contracting what I said earlier – we need to guard our hearts, they direct our actions
- But you will never enter the promise land by rules alone

Ø Rules alone is religion and religion does not save

The great picture of the journey of Israel from Egypt to the promise land is the parallel to our journey from the world to a deep meaningful relationship with God

Egypt is a picture of the world

Ø and God has saved, you and brought you out of the world

- just like Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea, so you passed through the waters of baptism

Ø And after a short time in the wilderness, a picture of new immature Christianity, God has you on the verge of the promise land

- But just as Moses couldn't take the people into the land, Moses a picture of the law, the rule
- So too religion can not take you in

It took Joshua for the children of Israel to lead them in

Ø and we lose something of the picture in English

- for Joshua is the Hebrews name Jashua
- Or what we would say in English – Jesus

Ø Moses could only take them so far

- They needed Joshua, Yashewa, Jesus to take them into the promise land

Ø We must guard our hearts, we must exhort one another and allow ourselves to be exhorted

- But rules and methods are much of a blessing and needed as they are, will simply be empty religion, without doing those things as you cling to Jesus, share life with Him, love on Him
- And obey what you know He says in the Word
- Friends we need to do it today!

Today if you will hear His voice – today means right now – the time to decide is right now

Ø do not wait!

- Do not let your heart continue to harden
- But let it soften under the Word of God

Ø Do you believe Him or not – concerning sin, the direction of your life – belief effects action