

Hebrews 3

Verse 1

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

- A** It seems apparent from the language here that those who are being addressed in this chapter are believers. He calls them “holy, brethren, partakers of heavenly calling”, and speaks of “our” confession. However, we know from the context of the entire book that the writer is addressing both believing and non-believing Jews.

The term "holy brethren" here refers to the New Testament believers, the saints, set-apart ones. We must remember in this connection that this epistle is addressed to the professing Church, made up of real believers and also of those who gave only an intellectual assent to the Word. The writer, knowing in his heart that some were not saved, yet addresses them upon the basis of their profession, not upon that of his own estimation of their spiritual status. Wuest

The word "consider" is the translation of katanoeo which means, "To consider attentively, to fix one's eyes or mind upon." The writer is instructing the reader to pay close attention to Jesus. I

To "consider" Christ as here enjoined, means to thoroughly ponder who and what He is; to attentively weigh His dignity, His excellency, His authority; to think of what is due to Him. A.W. Pink

- B** The Greek word for “confession” means “to speak the same thing as another,” thus, “to agree with someone else.” The idea here is that of the believer agreeing with God as to the report He gives in the Bible of His Son. That is the believer's confession.¹

First, as “the Apostle.” This has reference to the prophetic office of Christ, the title being employed because an “apostle” was the highest minister appointed in New Testament times. A.W. Pink

Apostle: This verb is often used in the LXX of God sending Moses on a commission for Him (Ex. 3:-7:), and is used of God sending the Lord Jesus on a commission (Luke 10:16; John 3:17, 5:36, 6:29). The two apostles are now compared. Wuest

Christ is more than an apostle, He is “the Apostle,” that is why none others, not even Paul, are mentioned in this Epistle. A.W. Pink

This at once gives us the principal feature which differentiates His priestly from His prophetic office. As Prophet, Christ is God's representative to His people; as “Priest,” He is their representative before God. A.W. Pink

¹ Wuest

Verses 2-6

He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. ³For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. ⁴For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. ⁵Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; ⁶but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house--whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

- A** The writer is acknowledging that Moses was a faithful servant. He did everything he was instructed to do (which was significant, down to the minutest detail in the wilderness tabernacle).

The history of Moses was remarkable from beginning to end. The hand of Providence preserved him as a babe, and the hand of God dug his grave at the finish. Between those terms he passed through the strangest and most contrastive vicissitudes which, surely, any mortal has ever experienced. The honors conferred upon him by God were much greater than any bestowed upon any other man, before or since. During the most memorable portion of their history, all of God's dealings with Israel were transacted through him. His position of nearness to Jehovah was remarkable, awesome, unique. He was in his own person, prophet, priest and king. Through him the whole of the Levitical economy was instituted. By him the Tabernacle was built. Thus we can well understand the high esteem in which the Jews held this favored man of God— cf. John 9: 28, 29. A.W. Pink

- B** However, Jesus is better than Moses because He created Moses. He is God. Because Jesus is better than Moses, Jesus' covenant is better than Moses' covenant.
- C** Where it says that we are His house, it means that we are His possession.

The proofs presented in this passage of our Lord's immeasurable superiority are seven in number, and may be set forth thus: Moses was an apostle, Christ "the Apostle" (verse 1). Moses was a member of a "house:" Christ was the Builder of one (verse 3). Moses was connected with a single house, Christ "built all things," being the Creator of the universe (verse 4). Moses was a man; Christ, God (verse 4). Moses was but a "servant" (verse 5); Christ, the "Son." Moses was a "testimony" of things to be spoken after (verse 5), Christ supplied the substance and fulfillment of what Moses witnessed unto. Moses was but a servant in the house of Jehovah, Christ was Son over His own house (verse 6). A.W. Pink

Verse 6

But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house--whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

The present tense is used in the Greek text, not the past. It is "who is faithful." It is a general designation of inherent character. Thus, Messiah is faithful as He always has been faithful. Wuest

A What is meant by the writer when he says "if"?

*"Now, the writer, keeping in mind the fact that only part of his readers were really saved, and the other part were merely making a profession of salvation, and the latter under stress of persecution were in danger of relapsing back to apostate Judaism, proposes to these readers a test whereby they can tell whether they really belong to the house of God or not, that is, whether they are really saved or not. The "if" in the Greek text is the particle ean, introducing a future, unfulfilled, hypothetical condition. The writer is proposing a condition as yet unfulfilled. **If these Jews, to whom he is writing, hold fast their confidence and the rejoicing of their professed hope in Messiah firm to the end of their lives, that fact shows that they belong to the house of God, in other words, are saved. If they do not do so, but instead, renounce that profession and return to the abrogated system of Levitical sacrifices, that shows that they never were saved. It is not the retention of salvation that is in question here, but the possession of salvation.** The text does not say, "whose house will we continue to be," but "whose house are we." Frequently the verb of being is left out by the Greek writer, it being understood in the light of the context. But it is in the Greek text here, and in the present tense. Therefore, the subject of the security of the believer is not in view here.-Wuest*

Colossian 1:22-23

He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- ²³if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

1 Even though this IF is different that the IF in Hebrews 6, Wuest explains,

The word "if" here is not ean, an unfulfilled, hypothetical condition used with the subjunctive mode, presenting the possibility of a future realization, but ei with the indicative, having here the idea of "assuming that you continue in the faith." That is, continuance in the gospel as it was preached by Paul would show that the person was saved and thus would be presented holy, without blemish, and unchargeable before God. That is, Paul was here addressing truly born-again Colossians, not unsaved professors of Christianity who would follow the Colossian heresy. Heretics would not so be presented, only true believers. It is not the retention of salvation that is in the apostle's mind, but the possession of it that would be shown by their continuance in the gospel. Expositors says; 'This is directed against the false teacher's assurance

that the gospel they had heard needed to be supplemented if they wished to attain salvation.”

- 2 If the student of this topic is not satisfied with the grammatical explanation, and prefers to believe that the IF indeed represents a *condition* of continued salvation, that condition still would be no greater than the original one which is to believe in Jesus, thus a continuation of what was begun. Wuest and other commentators take the view that a truly born again believer will of course continue to believe. However, it is within reason to assert that continued belief is a requirement, though this topic is HOTLY debated among even grace-based teachers today. What we can be sure of is that in neither instance is the writer of either book asserting that there are additional requirements of salvation beyond faith. Faith is the essential element here, faith in Jesus as Lord. Whether this is initial faith or continued faith, upon this we agree, faith is the only requirement for salvation and continued salvation.

*The word "confidence" is the translation of *parresia*, which is a compound of *pan* "all," and *hrema* "speech," literally "all speech." Its dominant idea is one of the boldness and confidence which are exhibited in freedom of speech, the unreserved, unfettered flow of language which is opposed to fear, ambiguity, and reserve. This confidence or boldness would characterize the speech and behavior of the Jew who was actually a possessor of salvation and not merely a professor of the same, but would soon disappear in the case of a mere professor should he turn away from Messiah back to the sacrifices. Wuest*

Verses 7-11

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,

- "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,
8DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME,
AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS,
9WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED ME BY TESTING ME,
AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.
10"THEFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION,
AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART,
AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS';
11AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH,
'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'"**

- A In saying, "therefore" the writer is bringing to mind that Jesus is better than the prophets, angels and Moses...therefore LISTEN.

"As the Holy Spirit saith." Striking indeed is it to mark the way it links up with Hebrews 1: 1 and Hebrews 2: 3. In the former it is God, the Father, who "spake." In Hebrews 2: 3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?" there it is the Son. Here in Hebrews 3: 7 the
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Speaker is the Spirit; thus, by linking together these three passages we hear all the Persons of the Godhead. A.W. Pink

The Hebrew reads, "O that you would hear his voice." Wuest

The condition which must be met if these Hebrews are to hear the voice of God is, that they must not harden their hearts. Wuest

These Jews were leaning back towards the First Testament. This was a heart-hardening process. They are warned against it. Wuest

A further aggravation of Israel's sin is that they saw God's wondrous works for "forty years." God continued His wonders all that time: despite their unbelief and murmuring the manna was sent daily till the Jordan was crossed! A.W. Pink

- B** The writer is referring to when the Children of Israel came up to the Promised Land but refused to believe God and enter. God had mightily delivered them from Egypt, opened the Red Sea, given them the Ten Commandments, and provided for them in the wilderness. For these reasons they should have readily chosen to believe God. It wasn't just that they didn't believe but that they refused to believe that God would deliver the Promised Land to them. They wandered 40 years, and none of the adults that time, except Caleb and Joshua were allowed to enter, but rather died in the wilderness.
- C** Wuest's translation of vs. 9 reveals the test to which the Children of Israel put God. This reveals that the Children of Israel not only had no faith in God, but believed He was lacking.

"When your fathers put Me to the test to see what good or evil there is in Me, when they put Me to the test for the purpose of approving Me should I meet the test, and saw my works forty years."

The sentence He pronounced against them was irrevocable, confirmed by His oath. The sentence was that they should not enter into Canaan, spoken of as a "rest" because entrance therein would have terminated their wilderness trials and travels; "God's rest," because it would complete His work of bringing Israel into the land promised their fathers, A.W. Pink

The word "grieved" is the translation of prosochthizo which means "to be wroth or displeased with." It is the translation in the LXX of Hebrew verbs meaning "to loathe, be disgusted, to spue out, to exclude, reject, abhor, repudiate." Wuest

The word translated "do err," planaō, here occurring in the passive voice, means "to be led astray, to be led aside from the right way." Wuest

The Hebrew has it, "They are a people of wanderers in heart." Wuest

- D In v10 God says they did not know His ways, that is to say they did not have an experiential knowledge of His ways. They should have, for He provided for them again and again.

Israel's ignorance of the ways of Jehovah preceded and was the cause of their being led astray. Their ignorance was due to their neglect of Jehovah, for the knowledge they lacked was experiential knowledge which was to be acquired through experience with the ways and character of God. Wuest

E What are God's New Covenant ways?

- 1 Believe in His Son Jesus and love one another.

1 John 3:23

This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

- 2 Accept Jesus' righteousness as your righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- 3 Accept that you are completely forgiven because of the perfection of what Jesus did.

Colossians 1:14

In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- 4 Accept that Jesus' obedience is credited to you.

Romans 5:19

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

- 5 Accept the completeness of what Jesus did.

John 19:30

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

- 6 Know that God's love for you is not based on you loving Him.

1 John 4:10

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

"They shall not enter into" in the Greek text include a conditional particle not brought over into the English. It is, "If they shall enter." This is a common Hebraistic formula in oaths. In the case where God speaks, as here, it is "may I not be Jehovah if they shall enter." Wuest

The word for "rest" here is katapausin. Pauo, the verb, means "to cease or desist." Thus, this kind of rest refers to a cessation of activity.-Wuest

Thus, the compound word refers to a permanent cessation of activity, a permanent rest. Wuest

Verses 12-13

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. ¹³But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

- A "Take care" means to "be seeing to it constantly".
- B An "evil" unbelieving heart is not an ordinary word for evil, but implies "active opposition to good". This evil heart is not content with its own unbelief but seeks to corrupt others.

The particular word for evil here is not kakos, evil in the abstract, but poneros, evil in active opposition to the good. When Satan is spoken of as the evil one, the word used is poneros. The latter is a much stronger word than kakos. Paul uses it in Galatians 1:4. "who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age", Wuest

The Greek order of words is "a heart evil with reference to unbelief." Wuest

- C The reason that the unbelief is evil is because it is a volitional choosing to not believe in Jesus for salvation.

We must be careful to discriminate here between a heart in which unbelief is present, and an unbelieving heart. The first may be true of a Christian, but not the second. Wuest

- D The "deceitfulness of sin" is the dabbling into not believing in Jesus, accepting some other sacrifice in order to be acceptable to God, or accepting Jesus plus something to be acceptable to God.

The recipients are warned against being hardened by a trick which their sin may play upon them. The definite article precedes the word "sin," identifying that sin with the one spoken of in the context, namely, the sin of apostasy. Wuest

- E "Falls away from" (in some translations "departing") refers to standing aloof. Wuest states,

Our word "apostasy" is derived from a form of this Greek word. Apostasy is defined as the act of someone who has previously subscribed to a certain belief, and who now renounces his former professed belief in favor of some other which is diametrically opposed to what he believed before. In other words, his new belief is not merely a new system of faith,

but one which at every point negates his former belief. These Jews, should they renounce their professed faith in the New Testament system and go back to the First Testament sacrifices, would be embracing that which if brought in again would negate the New Testament. It was a question of the Levitical sacrifices or the crucified Messiah. In making a profession of Messiah as High Priest and then renouncing that professed faith to return to a dependence upon the sacrifices which God set aside at the Cross, the person would commit the sin called apostasy.

- F** It would be rare for a believer today to facing the decision of “returning” to animal sacrifices, but many turn to the Old Covenant system of doing good to be blessed and refraining from evil in order to not be cursed, or trying to make themselves right before God by their own actions or religious ceremony. Paul dealt with Gentiles who had been born again by faith in Jesus and who later were enticed by Judaizers who told them they needed to ADD Jewish customs in order to be acceptable to God. With great passion Paul opposes these men and with extreme language warns those who would seek to add conditions to our right standing with God.

Galatians 1:6-9

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed

Galatians 3:1-3

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Galatians 5:1-4

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. ²Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. ⁴You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Verses 14-16

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, ¹⁵while it is said,

"TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,

DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

¹⁶For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

- A** “Partakers with Christ” is *metochoi*. Wuest writes,

Here the word means "participators." The word is used of those who are participators in something, or of those who are participators with someone... That would mean that

those to whom the inspired author of the book is writing, were co-participants of Messiah. They participated together in their possession of Him. In verse 6, the writer is speaking of the fact that true believers are Messiah's house, that is, they are His possession. In this verse, he is referring to the fact that Messiah is the possession of believers.

The word "confidence"/"assurance" is the translation of *hupostaseos*. Its primary meaning is "that on which anything is based." Hence it takes the sense of hope or confidence. It is the ground of hope they have in Messiah. This word is translated "title deed" in Hebrews 11:1 ("substance" A.V.). Wuest

The word was used, in secular manuscripts, of the documents bearing on the ownership of a person's property, deposited in the archives, and forming the evidence of ownership. It, therefore, was used of that which formed the basis or evidence of one's assurance of the ownership of anything. Wuest

- B The "if" used here is in the same case as the "if" in verse 6. According to Wuest, "If these first-century Jews would maintain their faith in Messiah to the end of their lives, that would show that they had become in the past partakers of Messiah, and that as a present result they were partakers of Him. Again, as in verse 6, the question is not one of the *retention* of salvation based upon a *persistence* of faith, but of the *possession* of salvation as evidenced by a *continuation* of faith...It is not the future of these Jews that the writer is concerned about here, but he is concerned as to whether...they were partakers of salvation in Messiah."
- C At least it can be clearly seen that the only basis for initial or continued assurance is faith in Jesus. The writer is not adding conditions for continued salvation. Faith in Jesus is the only standard.

The Greek word "provoke" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, but the Sept. employs it in Psalm 78: 17, 40; 106: 7, 33; Jeremiah 44: 8, etc. They "vexed" Him (Isa. 63: 10), and this because of their contempt of His word. Hereby they showed they were not of God A.W. Pink

Verse 17-19

And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

- A The primary sin Hebrews talks about is the sin of unbelief in Jesus. Unbelief = disobedience = sin. This is the only sin for which there is no further sacrifice. This is the only unpardonable sin. All other sins have been completely forgiven at the

cross. You can not sin your way out of God's presence or acceptance if you believe in Jesus, nor would someone who believes in Jesus seek to do so.

He now specifies the character of that sin , Unbelief. The order is terribly significant: they harkened not to God's voice; in consequence, their hearts were hardened; unbelief was the result; destruction, the issue. A.W. Pink

- B** “Disobedient” also translated in other versions “believed not”. It means “not to allow one’s self to be persuaded, not to comply with, to refuse or withhold belief, to be disobedient.”

The word translated "believed not" is apeitheo which means, "not to allow one's self to be persuaded, not to comply with, to refuse or withhold belief, to be disobedient." Wuest

It amounts to the same thing, differing only according to the angle of view-point: looked at from the mind or heart, it is “unbelief”; looked at from the will, it is “disobedience.” In either case it is the sure consequence of refusal to heed God’s voice. A.W. Pink

Translation: And to whom swear He that they should not enter into His rest but to those who were non-persuasible? Wuest

The word "unbelief" is the translation of apistia, a compound of the usual word for "faith" in the New Testament with Alpha privative prefixed to negate the word. Their disobedience led to their lack of faith. Wuest

“The apostle does not single out the sin of making and worshipping the golden calf; he does not bring before us the flagrant transgressions into which they fell at Beth-peor. Many much more striking and to our mind more fearful sins could have been pointed out, but God thinks the one sin greater than all is unbelief . We are saved by faith; we are lost through unbelief. The heart is purified by faith; the heart is hardened by unbelief. Faith brings us nigh to God; unbelief is departure from God” A.W. Pink

The apostle reminded them (verses 9, 17) that the unbelief of their fathers had been continued for “forty years.” Almost that very interval had now elapsed since the Son had died, risen again , and ascended to heaven. In Scripture, forty is the number of probation. The season of Israel’s testing was almost over; in A.D. 70 their final dispersion would occur. A.W. Pink