

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Hebrew 03: 07-11

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Hebrew chapter 3, from verse 7 to verse 11.

Moses was the most esteemed leader among the Israelites in the Old Testament. Both Moses and Jesus were sent by God and appointed as apostles to save God's people; they were both faithful in all of God's house. However, the author of Hebrews points out that Jesus is worthy of greater glory and honor than Moses. Jesus is the builder of God's house, while Moses is a part of the house. Jesus Christ is the Creator, while Moses is created. Jesus Christ is the Son who governs God's house, while Moses is the servant who serves in God's house. Because we believe in Jesus Christ, we have received hope and are able to enter into glory with Christ.

If we can be filled with confidence and joy through hope, we should boldly press forward and hold firm until the end, so that we may truly become God's house. In other words, if we cannot persevere to the end, we might still suffer loss and lose the privileges of being part of God's house. Christians come together to form the church, and this church is intended to be God's house in name and position. However, for it truly to be God's house in reality, it must be a place where Christ can reign as Lord, where the Holy Spirit can move freely, and where the Father can receive honor and worship.

Of course, the church today is still in the process of being built. The growth of each saint's spiritual life is the building of the church. Therefore, for the church to manifest the reality of God's house, it is the responsibility of every saint. The author of Hebrews wants to remind every believer who has crossed the "river" by inserting a lengthy warning and encouragement from 3:7 to 4:13. The background of this reminder is Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and into the wilderness. Because the Israelites hardened their hearts and rebelled against God, the first generation all perished in the wilderness. Only Joshua and Caleb led the second

generation into the promised land of Canaan. The author thus warns the Hebrew believers to learn lessons from this history. Today's passage, from verses 7 to 11, quotes Psalm 95:7–11 with a few slight modifications by the author to emphasize their burden.

Verse 7: “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you will hear His voice,”

If you look at the latter half of Psalm 95:7, it says, “Oh, that today you would hear His voice!” However, the author of Hebrews added the phrase, “as the Holy Spirit says.” This addition indicates that the author acknowledges that the words spoken by the psalmist were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The true author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit, and the psalmist was merely a vessel through whom the Spirit spoke His words.

This aligns perfectly with what Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” The term “given by inspiration of God” in the original text can be translated as “God-breathed” or “breathed out by God.” The Greek word for breath or spirit is the same as that for the Holy Spirit. Therefore, God's breath is the Holy Spirit.

When we read the Bible today, if we only focus on the literal words, merely understanding the surface meaning of the text, it will provide little help to us. Instead, we must discern the Spirit behind the words to truly receive life. As it says in 2 Corinthians 3:6, “for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” The original word for “Spirit” here is the Holy Spirit, reminding us that when reading the Scriptures, we should follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and seek to understand what the Spirit is saying through the words.

The phrase, “Today, if you will hear His voice,” refers to events that happened 3,500 years ago when Moses was leading the Israelites through the wilderness. The author of Psalm 95, believed to be David, wrote about these events 3,000 years ago. Though these events occurred long ago, they continue to speak to us today, urging

us to hear His voice. Thus, when David wrote Psalm 95 some 3,000 years ago, it was meant as a reminder to his generation. When the author of Hebrews wrote about it 2,000 years ago, it was to remind the Hebrew believers of that time. And now, 2,000 years later, as we read the Book of Hebrews, the Holy Spirit continues to remind us today: we must hear His voice this very day. The word of God transcends time, and the Spirit continues to speak to us through the Scriptures, urging us to respond in the present.

The key point of this verse lies in the emphasis on *“today.”* The events of yesterday have already passed, and we cannot change them. Tomorrow has not yet come, and we cannot guarantee that we will still be here. Only today is within our grasp. Moreover, today is the day of God's grace. If we wish to receive grace, we must seize the present moment. The Holy Spirit is speaking to us right now, and we must listen to what the Spirit is saying.

Verse 8: “Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,”

The Holy Spirit here reminds us not to harden our hearts. The heart is the most vital part of a person. As Proverbs 4:23 states, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." A person's life—whether it is successful or unsuccessful, abundant or lacking, vibrant or dull, fulfilling or empty—is determined by their heart. What exactly is the heart? The heart includes a person's mind, emotions, and will; in essence, it is the soul. In addition, it involves the passage between the spirit and the soul, which is the conscience. To harden one's heart means that when the Holy Spirit conveys God's will through your conscience to your heart, your emotions do not delight in God's will, your mind does not agree with God's will, and your will rejects God's will. At that moment, you become someone with a hardened heart.

The reasons a person may harden their heart and become unresponsive to God's word generally fall into four categories: First, a guilty conscience, when the conscience is burdened with guilt, the Holy Spirit cannot effectively deliver God's

word to our hearts. Second, emotions numbed by fleshly desires. When emotions are desensitized by indulging in the pleasures of the flesh and immersing in the fleeting beauties of the world, there is no capacity to appreciate the goodness of God's word. Third, a mind occupied by lusts of the eyes. When the mind is consumed with worldly concerns—such as the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the ambitions for power—it leaves no room to meditate on God's word. Fourth, a will be influenced by the pride of life. When the will is shaped by arrogance and self-centered pride, it resists accepting God's word, leading to a stubborn and stiff-necked attitude. A saint who hardens their heart is like the entire congregation of Israel in the wilderness, provoking God and testing Him during their rebellion.

If we compare this to Psalm 95:8, which says, "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness," what exactly were the places of Meribah and Massah? To understand this, we need to go back to Exodus 17. Moses led the congregation of Israel to Rephidim, and there was no water to drink. The people quarreled and complained against Moses. God instructed Moses to strike the rock with his staff, and water would come out to provide for the people. Moses did as instructed, and water flowed from the rock to supply Israel's needs.

Exodus 17:7 says, "So he called the name of the place Massah (which means 'test') and Meribah (which means 'quarreling'), because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'" Meribah means "quarreling," and Massah means "testing."

The author of Hebrews references Psalm 95:8 and directly translates Meribah as provoking God and Massah as testing God. The original audience of Hebrews, being familiar with the Old Testament, knew the history of Israel. The author points out how the Israelites in the wilderness provoked God and tested Him, which resulted in their inability to enter the Promised Land. In Rephidim, when they tested God because of their lack of water, God commanded Moses to strike the rock, causing water to flow out to meet the needs of the Israelites.

From the perspective of New Testament typology, this rock represents Christ. When Christ was pierced by a spear in His side on the cross, water flowed out, and this water became the source of salvation. All who believe can come to this source of salvation and drink to quench their thirst. This was part of God's eternal plan. The event of striking the rock at Rephidim occurred when the Israelites had just entered the wilderness and were quarreling because they had no water to drink, which was understandable. God did not withhold entry into the Promised Land due to this one instance of testing.

However, in Numbers 20, Moses led the Israelites to Kadesh, during the first month of the 40th year in the wilderness. Once again, the people quarreled because they had no water to drink. God instructed Moses to take the staff, gather the assembly, and speak to the rock to bring forth water. This was different from the first time, when Moses was told to strike the rock. But because Moses became angry with the Israelites, calling them rebels, and in his anger, he struck the rock again with his staff, even though the rock still provided water for the people. However, because Moses did not follow God's command to speak to the rock, but instead struck it, he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Perhaps we may not understand why such a situation would become so serious. This is precisely because the rock is a type of Christ, and we cannot crucify Christ again. As stated in Hebrews 6:6, which we will read later, "if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame." This act went against God's administrative authority, and as a result, God did not allow Moses to enter the Promised Land.

In Numbers 20:13, "This was the Waters of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and He was hallowed among them." The water that came from the rock at Kadesh was named the Waters of Meribah, meaning "the waters of strife," because the people contended with God, provoking His anger. In Psalm 95:8, David used these two events of the people quarreling because they had no water to drink to point out that the Israelites were hardening their hearts throughout their 40 years in the wilderness. From the first instance of not having water to drink, where they hardened their hearts, to the second instance 40 years

later at Kadesh, they still hardened their hearts. This demonstrates that the Israelites were continually testing God and provoking His anger.

Verse 9: “Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years.”

During their time in the wilderness, the Israelites spent 40 years continuously testing God, while also observing God's works for those 40 years. Every time they encountered difficulties, they complained and quarreled, and each time, God revealed His actions to resolve their problems. When they had no food, God sent manna from heaven; when they wanted meat, God sent quail in abundance to satisfy their cravings; when they had no water, God made water flow from the rock; when they faced enemies, God fought for them. They witnessed God's works for 40 years, yet they still did not change. When faced with difficulties, they still tested God with unbelief, so God's works had no benefit to them.

In fact, every time they tested God, it was also a test God gave them. While they were observing God's actions, God was also observing their response to the trials they faced. As a result, they failed during those 40 years. The number 40 represents a period of trials, and it signifies that throughout their lives in God's testing, they failed to demonstrate the fruit of faith. They completely failed.

Dear brothers and sisters, whenever we encounter unfavorable circumstances, we must first humble ourselves and seek God, avoiding complaints or rushing to find a solution. Instead, we should quiet ourselves before God, understand His guidance, and follow in Christ's footsteps. Every trial is an opportunity to refine our faith, helping us learn to rely on God.

Verse 10-11: “Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in *their* heart, and they have not known My ways.’ So, I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

God observed the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years and became weary of that generation because they always hardened their hearts and showed no signs of repentance. As a result, God pronounced judgment, saying that their hearts were often confused. The word "confused" in its original word means "to go astray," which refers to going down the wrong path. Because their hearts were not open to God, they continually sought their own desires and chose what they thought was best, but the paths they chose were all wrong. They had witnessed God's works for 40 years, yet they failed to understand God's ways.

The Chinese translation here, "did not know God's works," is not accurate. In verse 9, the word "works" is translated from the Greek word that refers to "works," while in verse 10, another Greek word is used, translated as "ways," which refers to paths that contrasting with the crooked paths of the human heart. The word "ways" can also be translated as "laws." The Israelites saw God's works, but they did not understand His ways or His laws. Psalm 103:7 says, "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel." The Israelites encountered difficulties, and God came to help them, so they witnessed God's works, but despite seeing many of His actions, they failed to understand His laws. Moses, on the other hand, understood God's ways.

God works according to certain principles because He cannot contradict Himself. If people could understand God's laws, they would know what aligns with God's will and what does not, allowing them to follow God in every situation. Since the Israelites did not understand God's laws, even the many miracles they witnessed were meaningless.

In His anger, God swore that they would never enter His rest. This was a stern declaration from God—"they shall not enter My rest." The Promised Land was the place of rest that God had long promised to the descendants of Abraham and Jacob, a place where the Israelites were to find rest. But because the first generation of Israelites harbored an evil heart of unbelief, God did not allow them to enter the Promised Land. Only Joshua and Caleb from that generation entered the land; the rest perished in the wilderness. The Israelites left Egypt with the goal of entering the Promised Land to enjoy rest, but the wilderness was the path they had to pass

through to reach it. To leave Egypt, enter the wilderness, and yet not reach the Promised Land is the most tragic situation. We must all take heed.

Let us pray: Lord, thank You for reminding us through the book of Hebrews of the history of the Israelites in the wilderness. They followed You for 40 years and observed Your works for 40 years, yet they did not understand Your ways. Because they had an evil heart of unbelief, even though they experienced many miracles, it was in vain. We ask for Your mercy, Lord, to soften our hearts. Let our hearts be full of appreciation for Your words, and help us think on them regularly, and be willing to obey Your word. In every situation in our lives, please grant us wisdom to understand the principles by which You work, and help us to follow You. Bless my daily life. In Jesus Christ's name, I pray. Amen!