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Recommended Citation

Vaught, W. O., "God's Enemy: A Hardened Heart" (1977). *Vaught Sermon Notes: Hebrews*. 17.
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GOD'S ENEMY-----A HARDENED HEART

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS
NUMBER 14
HEBREWS 3:8-10

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We begin this study with the admonition from God--"Do not go on hardening your hearts as in the day of testing in the Meribah in the desert."

The Exodus generation is used as an illustration as to why believers fail to use their priesthood in the Church Age. They went negative toward doctrine and if we do the same, we will also have our "meribah" and we will spend forty years of just wandering around. They all died the sin unto death in the desert. God's grace kept them forty years alive so they could respond to his grace and love.

We had the protasis of this conditional sentence in verse 7 and now in verse 8 we will have the apodosis. This passage is designed to wake up the believer and cause him to go positive toward Bible doctrine.

This Passage Is To Warn You

HEBREWS 3:8 "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:" The words "harden not" are from the present, active subjunctive of "skleruno." This is a warning not to have negative volition toward Bible doctrine. It is so easy to pick up this negative attitude. This comes from mental attitude sins, from getting one's eyes on people or getting one's eyes on things. These Jews walked out of Egypt wealthy. They collected their wages for 400 years in one night. Now this hardening of heart is not a sudden freezing up in one night. Hardening of the heart comes from getting sloppy in your volition. It comes a little bit at a time until the believer has become just like the unbeliever. This is how the believer comes to believe and talk and think like the unbeliever. This present, active subjunctive of "skleruno" plus the negative "me" and this construction shows that this is a very strong command. This is the strongest imperative in the Greek language. The subjunctive is used to show that God does not command this at the expense of your volition. So it says "DO NOT GO ON HARDENING YOUR HEARTS." God was placing emphasis on the process they were following. These Jews in Jerusalem in 67 A.D. were walking this dangerous path, very much like we are walking a very dangerous path in America today. They just had three years to repent and recover before the great destruction would fall in 70 A.D. They were about to commit the sin unto death and about to receive the 5th cycle of discipline. God was saying to them--

Stop your disasterous course!

The issue of your fall is based on what you think!

This is a sloppy attitude of disobedience which is destroying you!

Then God said, "Your hearts" and this referred to the right lobe, their mind, the place where they were suppose to store doctrinal truth. The only way to be sure you do not take in hardness is to take in doctrinal truth instead. It is one or the other. You must take in doctrinal truth day by day and thereby be fortified for the crisis. The answer is in doctrine. This is God's plea for his people to avoid reversionism. So this was a breakdown in the soul, a failure to take in doctrine.

It was a breakdown and distortion of rebound.

It was a failure to walk in grace.

It was a failure of the faith-rest technique.

They had failed to grow up. They were still in the baby stage. They were in the stage of "taking two aspirins" and claiming Romans 8:28. They hadn't gotten beyond the baby stage. When one grows up, he claims doctrine. You move beyond the place of claiming promises. These people still were asking God to feed them with a bottle and a nipple. We all ought to claim the promises, but then the day comes when we start eating solid food. So many baby Christians claim one promise at a time and never move on into doctrine. (The promises I made my son when he was a child in order to keep him going wouldn't be of any challenge to him now. He has moved out beyond that stage now.) When you grow up, you come to know the character of God. Many of you have been on the verge of great things and then you will slip back. You either make progress or you retrogress.

The next words in this verse are "as in the provocation." The word "as" is from "hos" and this takes us right back to the "meribah." The classic example of reversionism was the Exodus generation. "In the provocation" is from "en plus parapikrosmos" and this is a translation of the Hebrew word in Psalm 95:8 and the Hebrew word is "meriybah" and means strife or quarrel. They should have brought this word over into the Greek for so many don't understand this word "provocation."

Now turn to Exodus 17

EXODUS 17:1 "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink." The Jews had been liberated from Egypt. Egypt is a picture of the slave market of sin. Coming out of Egypt is a picture of redemption by way of the cross. The Passover is a picture of leaving the slave market of sin and moving into freedom. When God makes one free, he does it on a very wonderful basis. When these Jews walked out of Egypt, they didn't walk out broke. They walked out wealthy with 400 years of wages collected in one night. Once they were free and wealthy they could move immediately into super-grace and this is what Canaan represented. Or on the other hand, they could move into reversionism and reject Bible doctrine. They chose the latter. Now if one is going to have God's best, he must have the capacity for it and that's super-grace. That's positive volition on a daily basis. It was necessary for God to give them some tests.

The Tests God Gives

We will see doctrine applied to "no water" here in the desert. They were in that spot by the will of God and Rephadim was a place of refreshments. Moses was going to teach them. So we read that they had "no water to drink." So what? That didn't mean a thing. They had been through this same kind of test before. They came to "too much water" at the Red Sea and God had no trouble there. If they had had doctrine on the launching pad, they would have had no difficulty at Rephadim. They could have said, "I'm here because of the commandment of God and I know he will care for my every need."

(As I was studying this section of Scripture, I could hear in the background of my mind the song, "God Will Take Care Of You.") You see, they should have said, "Our lives are not ours, for we belong to God and he will provide for us."

EXODUS 17:2 "Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" This is the usual kind of thing that comes from a congregation that has no doctrine. We read that the people did "ribh" with Moses and it means to complain. Now answer this in your soul--Have you complained to God this week? If you have, that's a sign that you are slipping. The whole word is Me(ribh)bah. Complaining is a sign of reversionism. Complaining is an insult to the character of God. When they went to Moses complaining it meant two things--

a. They had rejected the leadership of Moses.

b. They had rejected the leadership of God who was behind Moses.

Moses said, "Why do you complain to me--why are you tempting God" and both meant exactly the same thing.

No water was not the real problem. The real problem was no doctrine in the soul. Thirst was not their danger. Having no thirst for doctrine was their danger. Typical of the reversionistic type they had their eyes on Moses and not on the Lord.

EXODUS 17:3 "And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" This was a murmuring against God's authority. People today do this very same thing. Think about how many are rebelling against God's authority today. God had to put the mad dogs down. Nathan and Abram thought they should be ruling instead of Moses who was from the Tribe of Levi. They knew that the tribe of Judah was the ruling tribe. So they revolted. But remember this, you can't second guess God. God knows what he is doing when he places one in authority. Moses was the man for the hour and you don't have many like Moses, ever! Later on when Saul was trying to kill David, you remember, David said, "I will not slay the Lord's anointed." David would not tamper with divine authority. They accused Moses of leading them to that spot so he could wipe them out. They had all that wealth out there and he would wipe them out and then scoop all that wealth up for himself and he would be the wealthiest man in all the world. This was a mental attitude sin right out of the sewer of their souls. They were bitter toward Moses. They were sitting around their tents having their rap sessions and were running Moses down. They were running Moses down, but the son of the bond woman always criticizes the son of the free woman. Any believer in reversionism is always critical of the super-grace man.

EXODUS 17:4 "And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me." Moses didn't say one word to them. He didn't try to justify what he had done. They were ready to stone him.

EXODUS 17:5 "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go." God told Moses to get out there where he could be a good target for their stones and he was to take the deacons along with him. Then God said, "And thy rod." This rod is explained in Exodus 7:20. It was the rod "wherewith thou smitest the river." This is the rod of divine power in human hands. It is the rod of God's judgment.

EXODUS 17:6 "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." The word for rock here is "Tsur." This is a sharp jagged rock. Moses was commanded to get all the people out there and he was to smite the rock and out would flow water. He was to judge the rock and water would come out.

EXODUS 17:7 "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?"

"Massah" means testing.

"Meribah" means complaining.

This particular incident is described in Psalm 95:8. "Harden not your heart" is an hiphil imperfect of "Qashah" plus the negative "al." This is the same as the aorist subjunctive of "skleruno." The word for heart is "Lebh." "Meribah" is the Hebrew word used here and it is in Psalm 95:8 which mentioned this event in Exodus 17:8.

Now we turn back to our passage in Hebrews.

The present, active, subjunctive of "Skleruno" plus the negative "Me" is the strongest imperative in Greek. God is saying, "I command you not to go on hardening your hearts as in the Meribah."

"In the day" is "kata hemera" and it refers to the incident of Exodus 17. The word "temptation" is from "peirasmos" and it means testing for the purpose of finding out if they were ready to go into Canaan. The "no water test" was the test of celebrity-ship of Jesus Christ over against reversionism.

Some Principles We Learn Here

1. Canaan is a type of the super-grace life.
2. The Exodus generation failed to enter Canaan because of reversionism.
3. Reversionism was manifest by the malfunction of the faith-rest life.
4. Reversionism cannot cope with the charge of the mosquito nor the charge of the elephant.
5. The function of our partnership with Jesus Christ today depends on super-grace and demands super-grace.
6. Therefore, to reach super-grace we must function under grace perception every day.
7. The thrust of this passage is super-grace versus reversionism, blessing versus misery, prosperity versus the sin unto death, occupation with Christ versus our stupidity.

The first Meribah incident is recorded in Exodus 17 and the second Meribah incident is recorded in Numbers 20. The commentary on these incidents is Psalm 95:8-11. The Church Age application is Hebrews 3:7-19.

LOOK NOW AT THE DOCTRINE OF REVOLUTION

1. The Word of God does not justify revolution. Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-14, Numbers 16.
(The American War for Independence was not a revolution. It was rather a fight for freedom and was not the overthrow of the establishment. There was taxation without representation. It was a fight for freedom.) Revolution always seeks to overthrow the establishment in an evil power grab.
2. Revolution involves the overthrow of the law of establishment. It also involves lawless mobs that cannot think.
3. Revolution means apostasy and reversionism and this leads to the lack and disregard for Bible doctrine. Is. 1:3-5, Is. 59:13
4. Revolution is always anti-God. Isaiah 31:6
5. Revolution is caused by a breakdown of the laws of divine establishment in the spirits of the people. Reversionism destroys standards in the human spirit. Reversionism and revolution destroy our system of law and order. Revolution is anti-God. Jeremiah 5:23
6. Revolution always has a primary motivator and that primary motivator is jealousy. Isaiah 11:13 compared to 1 Kings 12:19 and 2 Chronicles 10:19.
7. The communication of doctrine is designed to stop revolution. Ezekiel 2:3-10.
8. Heathenism, gypsyism, and hippyism is the result of revolution and they also bring revolution. They contradict the laws that bring freedom. Hippies are nothing but poorly costumed gypsies. Romans 1:19-26. It leads to human degradation. Rom. 1:27-32
9. The principle of revolution--Reversionism springs from power lust based on jealousy and this leads to the destruction of the freedom and rights of individuals. Hence revolution is a device of Satan in the Angelic Conflict in order to help Satan to establish his cosmic system and kingdom and to superimpose his will upon all mankind.
10. Reversionism is the basic cause of revolution and super-grace is the antidote. (This is the force of our passage here in Hebrews 3.)

HEBREWS 3:9 "When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years." The word is not "when" but is from "hou" and means "in what place or where." "Your fathers" is a nominative plural of "pater" and therefore it has a national concept. It refers to the historical background of a nation. People always can learn many lessons from their own history. Where liberalism is allowed to exist and persist there will be revolution. First there is theological liberalism and then there will be political liberalism. This was a reminder to those Jews in 67 A.D. that they should learn from their elders. But they will not learn and two million will die and ninety thousand will be taken captive into slavery.

The word "tempted" is an aorist, active, indicative of "peirazo" and it means to test as to determine good or evil. This is an ingressive aorist and it is used in this way to show that they began to test God in that first Meribah incident. Their failure to go in and possess the land when they came to Kadesh Barnea proves that they were not ready to possess the land.

Look at these tests--

1. Too much water at the Red Sea--Exodus 14.
2. No water at all at Shur--Exodus 15:22.
3. The wrong kind of water--Exodus 15:23.
4. Plenty of water at Elim--Exodus 15:27.
5. No water in Wilderness of Sin--Exodus 17.

So they were to test God and it means "began testing God to determine good or evil in God."

Summary

1. When believers begin to test God to see if God is good or evil, they are already in a state of reversionism.
(The idea is like this--God, you better come through and help me or I won't believe in you.)
2. If God does what they want him to do, they will approve him. If he doesn't do what they want him to do then they won't approve him. But who do we think we are to approve God?
3. The Jews of the Exodus generation were in deep reversionism.
4. This is the believer who is never satisfied with doctrine but must have something extra.
5. Their reversionism experience ran from the first Meribah to 40 years later to the second Meribah incident. It was down hill all the way.

Next we read "and saw" and this is an aorist, active, indicative of "horao" and means to have a panoramic view and this is a culminative aorist. They saw God's grace again and again but they never responded to it. Then we read "my works" and this is the accusative plural of "ergon." They had no appreciation for his supply of Manna and water and they wanted to go over and stone Moses. They learned how to be miserable for one day, and then they practiced it every day for forty years. In their souls they were constantly in revolt against God, though he saved them and you will see them when you get to heaven.

So this verse says, "In which place, Meribah, your reversionistic fathers (The Exodus generation) began testing God to determine good or evil in God by means of approving him after testing, if he should pass the test with their satisfaction, and they had a panoramic view of my grace for forty years."

Summary

1. The reversionistic believer ignores grace because he has no capacity for grace.

2. Capacity for grace cannot be acquired or assimilated through any human function of life. Capacity for grace comes only from Bible Doctrine in the soul and must move on to super grace, using the priesthood God gave each at the point of salvation.
3. Reversionism begins from negative volition toward Bible Doctrine which is our only hope of a capacity for grace and for loving God.
4. However, God continues to be faithful, even though we are unfaithful.
5. Only doctrine in the soul leads to a capacity for love which makes Christ the only celebrity of the super grace life.
6. The celebrity-ship of Jesus Christ is only possible through the consistent intake of Bible Doctrine through grace perception.
7. Reversionists have rejected doctrine and this is beautifully covered in 1 Cor. 10:1-12.

HEBREWS 3:10 "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways." "Wherefore" is from "dio" and should read "For this reason." "I was grieved" is an aorist, active, indicative of "prosochthizo" and it means to be angered to the point of being provoked. This is an anthropathism of God's displeasure. This is a culminative aorist. One thing had stacked upon another until God was provoked. Some went so far he took them out by the snake bites, an illustration of the sin unto death. Others were destroyed when the earth just opened up and swallowed them. God had different ways of punishing them. This was the long-suffering of God.

This caused God to say, "They do always err in their hearts; and they have not known my ways." The word for "err" is the present, passive, indicative of "planao" and it means "to wander." Lack of the knowledge of doctrine causes people to wander away from God.