

## **“His House, If We Hold Fast ...”**

*“Whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end” (Heb. 3:6).*

The chief concern and primary purpose for writing this epistle is now reached and expressed in the above words. The contrast between the first and second covenants are needed for all the ages but for those who had given up the first in order to share the blessings of the second and had suffered many different persecutions for it, the reassurances, exhortations and warnings found in the epistle were critically needed. Many of them had been cut off from their families; ostracized from society; robbed of their possessions, been beaten, imprisoned and/or had seen their brethren slain for their faith. Was it worth it? To the fearful, weak and doubtful the answer to the preceding question became increasing more difficult to answer. So, the following verses remind all his readers that being the house of God’s Son was a conditional matter. To be such was contingent upon the Hebrews holding fast the boldness they had manifested when they had openly and publicly confessed their faith that Jesus the Nazarene was their long expected Messiah (we shall see appeals to bold action further in the epistle). They were God’s House IF they held fast the glorying of their hope; their hope in the Resurrection, in eternal life, all through Christ Jesus, firm unto the end (Acts 22:6; Tit. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:1).

To encourage Hebrews to hold fast, first the writer cites an appeal: *“Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, today if ye shall hear his voice harden not your hearts, like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tried me by proving me” (3:7ff)*. This quotation is from Psalm 95:7-9 and the writer repeatedly returns this citation, with portions of it in this chapter and the one which follows (3:5; 4:3, 4, 7). One commentary speaks of the times in the wilderness when Israel tried God as he wrote: *“One provocation was in demanding bread at Sin; a second for want of water at Massah or Meribah; a third time at Sinai with the golden calf; a fourth time at Taberah for want of flesh; a fifth time at Kadesh when they refused to go up into Canaan, and the oath came that they should die in the wilderness ...” (Dr. J.P. Wilson, M.S. Notes).*

Because of Israel’s hardness of heart; because they tried God, God said, *“Wherefore I was displeased with this generation and said, they do always err in their heart; but they did not know my ways; as I swore in my wrath, they should not enter into my rest” (Heb. 3:10f)*. Paul had earlier written Corinthians, uttering similar warning. *“For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through*

*the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them and the rock was Christ. Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness” (1 Cor. 10:1-5).*

In light of the past history of rebellious Israel, the Hebrew writer urged, *“Take heed brethren lest haply there shall be in any of any an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called today, lest any one of you should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end” (Heb. 3:12-14).* *“Firm unto the end.”* This is the second occurrence of the phrase in this chapter: Both instances follow his appeal to *“hold fast.”* Hold fast our boldness and glorying; hold fast the beginning of our confidence.

Do we need such a appeal today? What do you think? With so many who halfheartedly worship when they do come, who come sporadically on a “hit or miss” attendance; this appeal is badly needed. But, will we harden our hearts? Will we, as Israel of old, turn a deaf ear to the pleas of the Holy Spirit?

Jim McDonald