

Hebrews 3:5-19 ESV

What Is the Root of the Problem?

Sunday, October 11 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, October 12 at 7 PM
 20th Sunday after Pentecost / 19th Sunday after Trinity – 2015

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Have you ever focused on your symptoms *yet ignored the root of your problem*? For example: symptom: severe headaches; response: take pain pills; actual problem: brain tumor!

Here is a *spiritual* example: symptom: lying; response: deny that lying is wrong; actual problem: unbelief!

We can go through life ignoring our actual problems, but it is best to *get to the root* and *receive God's saving medicine!*

- Holding Fast Is Necessary:** ⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, [he spoke for God] to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son [by fulfilling what Moses had spoken]. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. // So what about our membership in God's house: ➔ Are we boasting about God being the **beginning, middle**, and **end** of our salvation? OR ➔ Are we boasting about *our own actions*, saying, "**We** attend, **we** give, **we** serve..." Let us understand that those actions *cannot save*, but those who know Jesus as Savior will desire to do them!
- A Sad Example of Not Holding Fast:** ⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says [in Psalm 95:7b-11], "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty

years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' ¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" // Let me share with you one of many OT examples of the people going astray. The LORD had delivered them from their slavery in Egypt and was giving them the Promised Land. But the *unfaithful* spies said the people in the land were too strong for them to conquer. We now pick up in Numbers chapter 14:

- a. ¹ Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. ² And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The **whole congregation** said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³ Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" ⁴ And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." [*They rejected the LORD and Moses, His chosen servant; then sought to follow their way.*]
- b. ⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. ⁶ And **Joshua...** and **Caleb...**, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. ⁸ If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. ⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." ¹⁰ Then **all the congregation** said to stone them with stones....

When the going got tough, *they complained and sought a leader who would do things their way.* So they did not hold fast. Why? *Because of their unbelief; that was the root of their problem!*

3. **Let Us Encourage Each Other to Hold Fast:** ¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. // So it is important for us *who do believe* to exhort – *thus earnestly urge* – each other every day. Why? Because sin is deceitful, thus *dishonest, deceptive, misleading!* Sin says to you and me: *Don't worry, do it your way; God will be okay with it and everything will be fine - both now and forever!* But take note: There is a very real connection between belief and action.

- a. Acts of BELIEF – those who **believe** seek to do whatever God says by:
 - ▶ Being *diligent* in daily Bible Time and Prayer;
 - ▶ being *faithful* in weekly Bible Class and Divine Service;
 - ▶ being *generous* in supporting the soul-saving work of God's Kingdom; and
 - ▶ being *consistent* in serving as gifted.
- b. Acts of UNBELIEF – those who **do not believe** have an excuse for whatever God says:
 - ▶ Bible and prayer – *I can be a Christian without them;*
 - ▶ Bible Class and Divine Service – *They are too long and difficult;*
 - ▶ giving generously – *I have my own bills;*
 - ▶ serving – *someone else will do it.*
- c. The people of Israel did not reject God, *but they did reject God's ways*. Even today many who say they are Christians do not reject Christ, *but they reject His ways*. Is it possible to do it our way, and yet still be saved (Ps. 145:18-20; Matt. 28:19-20; John 15:14; James 1:22)?

4. **The Root of the Problem is Unbelief:** ¹⁵ As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” ¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. // Note the parallel pattern between long ago and today:

- a. The time of Moses and the multitude in the wilderness: ✓ They **heard**, ✓ they **hardened** their hearts, *so they did not do what God said*, and ✓ they **died** in the wilderness, *so they did not enter the Promised Land*. What was the root of their problem? The symptom: *disobedience*, the root: *unbelief*.
- b. Today: ✓ Some people **hear**, *even though most have closed their ears to God*, ✓ of those who do hear, many **harden** their hearts, *so they do not do what God says*, and ✓ many will **die** without Jesus. What is the root of their problem? The symptom: *disobedience*, the root: *unbelief*.

Conclusion: So let us ➡ examine ourselves in the light of God’s Word, ➡ see our sins, and ➡ identify the root of our problem. Then, *by God’s grace*, let us † believe in Jesus as our only Savior, † know that heaven is open for us thru Him, and † gladly do whatever He says!

And all God’s people said: **Amen!**