

I. Introduction and review.

II. Don't repeat the past sins of Israel. v. 7-11, 16-19 Psalm 95:7-11

A. God speaks to you *today*. v. 7

1. Our author has a very high view of the divine authorship of Scripture. v. 7a 1:1 10:15 II Pe. 1:21
2. Our author declares the ongoing relevance of the entire Bible. v. 7a I Cor. 10:11 II Tim. 3:16-17 Jude 1:5
3. Because it is God who is speaking to you today, pay close attention. v. 7b

B. Our author quotes, then expounds Psalm 95:7-11. v. 7b-11

1. Psalm 95 begins with joyful praise to the LORD, our great Rock. Ps. 95:1-7a
2. Then Israel is warned not to follow their ancestors' evil example. Ps. 95:7b-11
3. The key terms and concepts from Psalm 95 are expounded in the following verses.

C. Learn from God's dealings with Israel. v. 7-11, 16-19

1. The essential warning is, *Do not harden your hearts*. v. 7b-8a,15 4:7
2. God graciously and miraculously delivered them from slavery in Egypt. v. 16b Ex. 13:21 16:4-5 17:6
3. They tested and provoked God. v. 8-9,16 Ex. 17:1-7 Nu. 13:1-14:38 20:1-13
 - a. They repeatedly complained about the lack of water. Ex. 17:1-7 Num. 20:1-13
 - b. They refused to enter the Promised Land. Num. 13-14 13:32-14:4
4. God became angry at their sinful rebellion. v. 10,17a Num. 14:27-35
5. That disobedient generation never entered God's rest. v. 11,17b-18 Dt. 1:34-35 Nu. 26:64f 14:23 Ps. 90:7-9
6. The root cause of their rebellion, sin, and disobedience was their unbelief. v. 19 Ps. 78:22,32 Deut. 9:23

D. We face the same tests faced by the Exodus generation.

1. The Israelites were put to the test when they lacked water and faced strong foes.
2. The Hebrew Christians were tempted to go back to Judaism because of trials.
3. We too are tempted to doubt God in the day of trial. Mark 4:16-19
4. What happened to them will happen to us if we harden our hearts against God in the day of trial.
5. Past privileges and blessings do not guarantee future entrance into God's rest.

III. How can you remain faithful to God? v. 12-15

A. Watch your heart. v. 12

1. Don't think you are invincible. v. 12a I Cor. 10:12
2. The root of all sin is unbelief. v. 12b, 19
 - a. Israel rebelled because they didn't trust God to give them food, water, and victory over their enemies.
 - b. We despair in the midst of our trials because we don't trust God. Rom. 8:28
 - c. We succumb to temptation because we don't believe God's way is best.
3. Unbelief leads to apostasy (falling away). v. 12c 6:4f 10:26f II Pe. 2:15,20f

B. Encourage one another daily. v. 13

1. Perseverance is a community project. Ecc. 4:11-12 Rom. 12:5 I Co. 12:27
2. We need each other because sin is so deceitful. Ge. 3:1f Mt. 13:22 II Co. 11:13

3. Those deceived by sin become hardened. Js. 1:14-15
4. When you see someone succumbing to sin's deception, exhort him (her). Gal. 6:1f Js. 5:19-20 I John 5:16 Mt. 18:15f
5. Encourage one another by building up each others' faith in Christ. 3:1 10:24
6. Don't tear down others' faith through grumbling and murmuring. I Co. 10:10-11
7. Are you open to receiving exhortation? Pr. 27:6 13:10 12:15
8. This mutual exhortation should be happening regularly (daily).
9. Are you involved in relationships of mutual encouragement? 10:24-25

C. Hold fast to Christ until the end. v. 14, 6

1. Some appear to begin with Christ, but do not endure to the end. Mark 4:1f
2. Is our author saying that true believers can fall away? Ro. 8:29f Jo. 10:27-28 6:37
 - a. He is not saying that we become partakers of Christ through perseverance.
 - b. We prove we have become partakers of Christ when we persevere. Phil. 1:6
 - c. Those who don't persevere aren't partakers of Christ. Jo. 8:31 I Jo. 2:19
3. God calls you to exert great effort, fighting to maintain your assurance. 6:11-12 Phil. 2:12-13
4. God wants you to have full assurance.

IV. Concluding applications.

- A. Unbelief is the big problem! v. 19 Num. 14:11
- B. If you have made a beginning with God, strive to endure to the end.
- C. If you have never made a start with God, turn from your sin to Christ, today.

Discussion questions

1. What is our author's view of the Old Testament Scriptures?
2. How can events from long ago be applied to us today?
3. How is our situation like that of Israel in the wilderness?
4. Why did Israel fail?
5. In what sense is all sin rooted in unbelief?
6. What can you do to ensure that you will not fall away?
7. Who are those who do apostatize?
8. How can we help each other to persevere in the faith?
9. What is the place of our effort in persevering?
10. Do you have assurance of your salvation? Why or why not?