

Our Scripture lesson is taken from the Book of Hebrews Chapter three Verses 12 and 13. I would like to read out of the two versions that are most used in our church, the ESV and the Navy. They say they state things a little bit differently and I think therefore helpfully. The first is the ESV. Take care brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God.

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. The Navy reads see to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sins.

Deceitfulness. One of the versions just read encourages us to exhort one another every day, while the other encourages us to encourage each other daily. Alerting you to the appearance of the words every day or daily in those two versions ought to remind us by now that we are thinking through in this short summer series, what it means to live the Christian Life Day by day.

Jesus tells us to take up our cross daily. The Apostle Paul is the illustration of what it means to pray daily when he says to the Thessalonians church, I pray most earnestly for you day and night when it comes to meditate, reading in the Scriptures, the Word of God. Joshua is our illustration, where he was commanded to daily meditate in the Holy Scriptures.

Today the theme is a sober one. Indeed. It's quite serious. There is a terrifying warning in this passage. We don't want to turn away from the living God. We don't want to be hardened against God because we have been deceived by the sin we all too often cherish. But the command simultaneously does not simply address us as individual believers.

There is a corporate value to these verses where we're told that we are to exhort one another. We are to encourage one another. We are to do so daily so that we will not have hard hearts toward God and drift away from His purposes and cause for us that we will help each other along and staying true to God.

Truth that the pursuit of God and His goodness and the pursuit of holiness and how it brings glory to Him. So this is a quite serious passage indeed. And one of the first things that we notice is that he is urging on us the necessity of one another, religion. What we sometimes call in the New Testament scriptures, the reciprocal commands, where we are commanded to do various things for one another.

These reciprocal commands, all of them collectively remind us of what our affairs mission ought to be toward each other and what our accountability ought to look like toward each other. It's interesting that when you look at the New Testament scriptures, these one another, these reciprocal commands break down into two list. There's a list of neg negative reciprocal commands, and there is another longer list of positive one.

Another commands so far as the negative list is concerned. Those commands go like this. Do not judge one another. Do not lie to one another. Do not provoke one another to anger. Do not hold grudges against one another. These do not commands that if we violate any one of them in their negative state, what we do is corrupt the shared life that we are to have together.

Moving from the negative to the positive. You have commands that go like this. Be kind and tenderhearted toward each other. Bear one another's burdens. Serve one another. Comfort one another. Pray for one another. These commands are utterly crucial. They fall underneath an umbrella term that we find from top, find from time to time in the New Testament in it.

And it is that word fellowship. It's a single word in the original language Koinonia Fellowship. It means to have in common or to share in common. It's talking about our shared life together, where we have affection for each other and we are accountable to each other. Thus, these one another commands are utterly crucial to help us flesh that out a little more in terms of numerical frequency, the two one another commands that appear most often in the New Testament is the command to love one another and the command to forgive one another.

For example, we're told to love one another fervently and from the heart. Another version of First Peter 122 says We are to love one another deeply. And from the heart. This is not a superficial love. This is not an easygoing type of friendly love. This is a deep and abiding Christlike love. The reason I say Christlike is because it is Jesus who said love.

One another, even as I have loved you. A consistent, humble, serving, sacrificing, kind of love is to characterize the people of God. But what if we don't love as we should do that one another commands to go on to say forgive each other. In fact, it goes like this in Colossians. Chapter three Forgive of each other as Christ has forgiven you.

Christ holds no grudges against His redeemed people. He grants forgiveness daily and freely and lovingly. And it's interesting in both of those commands. Love one another and forgive one another. What's at stake for us is Christ's likeness. He is how we are to forgive each other. He is how we are to love each other. So there is the very real presence of our shared life together in the new test moment.

And this shared life is to be governed both by these negative and positive one another commands. Now, when it comes to Hebrews chapter three, excuse me, when it comes to Hebrews chapter three, we have a command that is certainly weighty with significant. It's a very sober command. Encourage one another daily, exhort one another every day. But it's not just sort of a general kind of encouragement, a kind of of loose exhortation.

Instead, what's at stake is your heart and mine. What's at stake is do we turn away from God in the things of God? Do we allow sin to harden our hearts against God? And in order to prevent that, not only must we see to ourselves about it, we are to look out for one another and speak the truth to one another from an honest and good heart.

That's really the theme of these verses. And what I would like to do, since this is somewhat of a new thought for some of us, is simply work through in their proper order. Every phrase that is found in Hebrews 12 and 13. And we began in verse 12 with this phrase, see to it, brothers and sisters see to it.

It has something of an attitude behind it, like you might say to one of your children, see, to it there. There is a bit of force there. Actually, the word can mean take care, be most careful. In other words, see to it that you don't drift away from God. See to it that you remain true and faithful to God.

But who is to see to it? The verse says, See to it. Brothers and sisters. When he calls those who are reading this for the first time, brothers and sisters, it is unmistakable that he is referring to

Christian people. He is writing to those who have already received Jesus Christ by faith. They have embraced the Gospel and they have been brought into the family of God.

They are sons and daughters of grace, brothers and sisters in Christ. And He speaks collectively to the Hebrew Church. See to it. This is a most serious warning. It is utterly necessary that you are careful about this matter. In fact, another version even translates the word Beware. Be careful. Vigilance is required. So there's this earnestness. There's this urgency about these verses.

Why is it that necessary? Well, the next phrase reads that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart. Again, he's writing to believers, brothers and sisters. See to it that you don't have an evil, unbelieving heart, a sinful, unbelieving heart. This alerts us to a sober truth that it is entirely possible. I am even willing to argue it is all too easy for the believing heart to become evil on the inside.

No doubt you have heard that that old saying the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. Jesus thinks along those lines in Matthew 15 verse 19, he says, For out of the heart, come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. What the Lord is communicating to us is what's on the inside of your heart ultimately comes out.

And if there is a heart filled with sinful thoughts and embrace what comes out of it is the thing that is in it. And Jesus is only quoting the proverbs. He's referring to Solomon in Proverbs four, verse 23, when he puts it ever so simply above all else, see to it above all else, guard your heart. Be sure what you're putting into it is the right sort of reality above all else.

Guard your heart for everything you do flows out of it. What a statement. Everything that is in there in terms of speaking or activity flow out of the heart. It would not be hard for you to imagine me holding a bottle of water and I take the cap off the bottle of water and I began to shake it.

What comes out? Not lemonade. Water. Because water was in the bottle. It's that simple. See to it. Guard your heart. As the old navigators used to say, garbage in, garbage out, godliness and godliness out. And we live at a time when we are to invest our lives into filling our hearts more

and more with the reality of God and His glory and grace and the truth of God and His Word so that what flows out of it more and more is what pleases him.

And so he is saying to us, quite real here. He says, See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart. Why that turns away from the living God. You hear the soberness of his argument. See to it, brothers and sisters, that you don't have an evil, unbelieving heart, so that you turn away from God, that you turn away from the pursuit of God.

That you turn away from the great cause of God in this world. That you turn away from fellowship with him and loving him and drift into cold hearted indifference. Does it occur to us, brothers and sisters, that there is in the heart of every redeemed person, no matter how far the advance into holiness we get that there is in the heart of the the believing person a proneness.

We sing the prayer, don't we? Prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart Oh, take and see Let sail it for thy courts above see to it Beware Be on guard,
brothers and sisters, so that you do not drift too into a sinful heart of unbelief that turns away from the living God.

It's a reminder from a negative angle that our lives are always to be God focused, God centered sins, resisting holiness, pursuing Christ, exalting lives. We are always to be God, word going hard after God. There's an old prayer. It dates back almost 900 years ago. It was used in a popular song in the 1950s, more recently in a Christian song.

But the prayer itself is almost 900 years. Day by day, dear Lord, of the three things I pray to see the more clearly to love thee more dearly to follow, the more nearly day by day. It's a way of praying that I never turn away from God, that I see Him in the Scriptures more and more clearly, that I love Him from the deep chamber of my heart, and that I want to follow him and live for his purposes while living in his presence.

Day by day. So he says, Here, see to it family of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, that you don't have a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from God, that you don't drift into that sort of awfulness. But then He remind us that this is not a personal matter. This is not an issue of privacy in the Christian life.

This is a corporate responsibility. This is one of those one another commands in our shared life together so that we help by exhortation and encouraging each other to not harden our hearts toward God. And so that's why we read in the very next phrase, but encourage one another daily as long as it is called today, encourage one another, exhort one another, remind each other of what is at stake.

Speak truth into the life of each other. We don't do it with a judged mental spirit, but we do speak with gentleness and with clarity into each other's lives so that we don't allow each other or us as a congregation to turn away from God so that our hearts harden. I guess you could say that you've been gone for three weeks and you are back with this kind of sober sermon.

Shouldn't it have been a more encouraging one? Well, yes, of course, the command is encourage one another. But it's a serious sort of encouraging that we don't harden ourselves. You know, there is a view of Christian friendship that is a disaster in the Christian church these days. It is a view of friendship that reflects the world's view of things that my job as a friend is to have my friends back.

No. Our job as brothers and sisters in Christ, our jobs as friends is to fight for each other's souls, to encourage and to exhort one another. We ought to stop this path of gossip. We are all, Hey, could we talk and pray together about such and such a thing? I read an article a short while back that was rather loosely titled The Loss of Christian Conversation that we are able to talk about a lot of things that interest us, whether the sports or cooking or hobby or other serious matters or politics or whatever.

But we rarely have this sort of discipline of Christian conversation where we lovingly and graciously avoiding abrasive tones and avoiding a judge mental spirit. And we just speak truth lovingly and compassionately. Because I have a response. Civility, and you do too. So love each other that we aim to help so that no one's heart hardens against God. We don't hear this sort of text very often.

But wouldn't you agree that from time to time it's a good idea to be reminded of this one? Another reality of life? Well, there's one more phrase left, and I've pretty much talked about it at the end of verse 13, we read so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against it. Sin is deceptive.

It never presents itself to us, and it is personified in the New Testament scriptures and never presents itself as what it really is. It always promises pleasure. But as the New Testament reminds us, it's a pleasure that doesn't last. It's a passing pleasure that is followed by the warnings of the New Testament. Be sure your sins will find you out that we reap what we sign.

But when the heart becomes hardened by sin, it becomes easy for us to justify it. It becomes easy for us to comfort it. And though we would never admit it or say it out loud, we might brist a bit when I say it, but when the heart is hardened toward God, it loves its sin. And this is why, of course, we also sing Take Away the Love of sending Alpha and Omega Be.

And so this is what is at stake here. Exhort one another daily, encourage one another daily, pray with each other that we would persevere in love for God, that we would persevere in living to please Him, and that we would so help each other, even if it meant speaking in encouraging word, or even if it meant speaking an edifying or exhorting word.

We would love enough and care enough that our hearts don't become hard toward God, but are filled with praise for him. That's what the verse teaches. I told you, it's a sober verse and a serious one. And so let me close with a what we might call a few guidelines to help us get started with this sort of exhortation.

And the first is this resolve to live reciprocally every day, commit to God himself, that you will take the one another commands seriously, that the shared life we are to have together is biblically rational and necessary. Don't do it with an abrasive tone. Don't do it with a judge. Mental spirit. But don't, don't do it. The command is for us to love each other enough to encourage each other on the path of righteousness.

For his name sake. Secondly, earnestly pray, asking God for wisdom and for gentleness before, for you encourage or exhort a brother or sister. Third, when you do exhort, speak in gentle and a humble manner. And finally, realize that exhorting, encouraging along these lines could prove costly. People are not naturally ready to hear a kind hearted correction in a gentle but firm exhortation.

O pray that God would make you ready should any brother or sister love you enough to speak into your life and be willing to wait patiently until that brother or sister can absorb what needed to be said. Love one another. Forgive one another. Do not judge one another. Do not envy one another. Do not provoke anyone to anger comfort one another.

Serve one another. Be gentle toward one another. And encourage one another. Let us pray, father in heaven for your glory and our joy. Make us a people who are glad hearted and living the reciprocal life. Help us to cultivate that one another Christianity, that one another family of grace, and help us in the fight against sin together to pray for each other, to speak truth into each other's life so that we both as church and as people, never turn away from God and are never deceived by sin.

We pray in your name. Amen.