

LENT DEVOTIONAL



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LENTEN DEVOTIONAL MARCH 1, 2023

SCRIPTURE

HEBREWS 3:12-19

12 Take care, brothers and sisters, that none of you may have an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end. 15 As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

16 Now who were they who heard and rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses? 17 And with whom was he angry forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, if not to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

DEVOTIONAL

Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews is an ancient question, and recently contentious even on *Jeopardy!* While most scholars deny that the Apostle Paul penned the letter, there is no doubt that the text quotes extensively from the Hebrew Scriptures. Crucial to modern interpretation is an understanding of Hebrew words.

This passage's "unbelieving heart" might confuse modern English readers, for "belief" in our culture is often conceptualized as intellectual assent, while matters of the heart are typically thought of as emotions. But in the Hebrew Scriptures, such a phrase referred not to what was thought or felt, but to what was done: "Hear, O Israel . . . You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut 6:4).

Today's passage cites the Israelites in the wilderness as a negative example of following the Shema — they heard and yet did not obey (Heb 3:16). As Maya Angelou said, "When you know better, do better."

Desiring to do better, I appreciate the call to "exhort one another every day" (Heb 3:13). A decade after graduation, I still maintain relationships with faculty, staff and fellow M.Div. students. Currently, I not only learn from my cohort of D.Min. students, but their support is also life-giving. Though no one has all the answers (even winners of *Jeopardy!*), our colleagues can inspire us to use our learning in service to God and the larger community.

PRAYER

Lord of the star fields, be God with us during Lent. Inspire us to do what we say and say what we mean. We thank you for the faculty, staff and students who journey with us. Bind us together to exhort and encourage one another in love. May it be so.

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