***Hebrews 3:12-14 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,”, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.***

Last week, we talked about belief. We learned that Jesus’s own country, His hometown, rejected Him. They believed that He spoke wise words and did mighty works. They didn’t reject his ability. Oh no, they accepted His ability. They rejected His identity. They rejected His Divinity. And the Bible tells us that Jesus marveled at their unbelief. Unbelief is a danger. It was a danger then and it is a danger now. So many believe in Jesus’ ability, but not His Divinity… they believe in how He heals, but not in who He is.

The writer of Hebrews spotted this disease in the early church and gives instruction on avoiding this disease. The good news is that the disease is avoidable. More good news is that it is completely curable. The bad news is that it’s easy to catch and, left untreated, the sickness grows progressively worse. It can grow until the sufferer is spiritually paralyzed.

Verse 12 starts out *Beware, brethren.*Beware. Take note. Be careful. This holds the idea of being watchful beforehand. Like Barney Fife used to say – Nip it in the bud. Be on guard. The world wants to draw all people away from Christ. But this is addressed to the brethren. So, the writer is not addressing the lost here, but the believer… this is not directed to the people outside of the church walls, but inside, in the very pews this morning. We must beware.

Verse 12 continues *lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.* We stay on guard for creeping sin in our lives. Is unbelief the cause of the evil heart or is the evil heart the cause of the unbelief? The instruction is not to beware one or the other, like we can dabble in one or dabble in the other without getting sick. The instruction is to stay clear of both. Examine yourself and be on guard for anything that is not of Christ. Squelch doubts. Flee from temptation. An evil heart of unbelief, allowed to take any root, allowed to grow, allowed to flourish, will lead to separation, distance, and a loss of intimacy with the living God. This is why we seek God’s face daily and repent, asking Him to search our hearts and reveal any sin, any unpleasing thing, so it might be addressed. We beware brethren… daily.

Verse 13 starts *but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,”.* Exhort. Help one another beware. Pray for one another. Implore one another. Look out for one another. Support one another… when? Daily, while it is called Today – the current day. And what we will do tomorrow? The same. Brothers and sisters in Christ protect brothers and sisters in Christ.

Verse 13 finishes *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* We are already on guard lest we develop an evil heart of unbelief and suffer a loss of intimacy with our God. We know that, left unchecked, hearts will become hardened, separation will seem like no big deal. The Bible is filled with the consequences of hardened hearts. And all were deceived through the same slow process of sin. The deceitfulness of sin… talk to almost anyone who has been an alcoholic, a drug abuser, an adulterer, a gambler, a thief, a gossip, a murderer and you’ll find out – sin didn’t happen all at once… it was a descent… a deceitful process… it was no big deal… until it was. Sin blinds us. Jeremiah 17:9 says - *The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?* But we know who can know it… Jesus – Mark 2:8 *But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?*

Verse 14 *For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.* So, we’ve been told to beware – be on guard. We’ve been told to watch out for one another. We know we’re on the lookout for an evil heart of unbelief being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We know our own heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We understand that Jesus sees our hearts. But how do we avoid all of this disease? All the hurt that comes with the deceitfulness of sin… all of the misery of being separated from God? We hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. Who is our Confidence? Jesus. We are partakers of Christ. We believe in Him. We have placed our Trust in Who He Is. We don’t just know of Him. We know Him. We love Him. We are in love with Him. We know His abilities and we know His identity, but most critically of all, we know His Divinity and we hold steadfast in confidence, asking Him to examine our hearts, revealing any sign of sickness, and clinging to the cure in Jesus Christ.

This week, let’s pray that God will examine our hearts. Is there sin that has crept in? It seemed like no big deal… it started as a lustful glance, a stolen dollar, a dirty picture, a drug, a drink, a thought… now, the heart is hardened, and sin is in control. Today is the day to put it all behind you. I am exhorting you… put it away. Let today be the day of return to God, return to fellowship, return to the confidence we have – Jesus. He is knocking at the door. Will you let Him in? He’s ready to heal… do you believe this?