

SCRIPTURE

FOCUS

MINISTRY

Heb 3:15 While it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the provocation.”

Soften your heart and listen to His voice.

Hebrews 3:12 says, “Beware, brothers, lest perhaps there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God.” No heart is more evil than a heart of unbelief. Nothing offends God as much as our unbelief. David committed a dreadful sin, murdering a man and taking his wife. Governmentally speaking, however, this sin was not that serious, for it did not cause God to give up David. But the unbelief of the children of Israel in the wilderness caused God to give them up. Unbelief insults and offends God Himself. Our God is the living God. Unbelief is so evil because it insults the living, faithful, and almighty God. If we do not believe in God, in His work and in His ways, we insult Him. This is why we must beware of unbelief. Verse 10 says, “Therefore I was displeased with this generation, and I said, They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.” God’s ways are different from His acts. His acts are His activities; His ways are the principles by which He acts. The children of Israel knew only His acts, but Moses knew His ways (Psa. 103:7). Although the children of Israel witnessed such a miracle of the manna, they, unlike Moses, saw only the acts of God; they did not know God’s faithful, divine ways. We may shout, “Praise the Lord!” one night in a meeting and murmur against the Lord the next morning. Our God is living and has His principles in doing things. He will never deny Himself. He is able, almighty, and faithful, always keeping His promises and fulfilling His word. In a sense, an evil heart is very reasonable; it reasons a great deal. However, in another sense, it is stubborn and without reason because it is hardened. Hence, it departs from the right track and goes astray, not knowing God’s ways or principles. It tries God by putting Him to the test (v. 9). This is the condition of an evil heart. How dangerous it is for our heart to be hardened! We need to pray again and again for the Lord to soften our heart, saying, “Lord, have mercy on me. Soften my heart and never allow it to be hardened.” An evil heart produces unbelief. Unbelief reasons according to the natural concept, not according to God’s principle. Consider the reasoning of the children of Israel in Numbers 13:31-33. Their reasonings included some lies, for they said that “the land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that eats up its inhabitants.” That was a lie. Joshua and Caleb said, “Only do not rebel against Jehovah, nor should you fear the people of the land, for they are our bread. Their protection has been removed from them, and Jehovah is with us; do not fear them” (14:9). Joshua and Caleb spoke the truth. However, the children of Israel did not reason according to the truth but according to the lie, not counting on the ways of God. In the beginning, God had promised Moses that He would bring the Israelites into the good land. That one word should have been sufficient for them. The children of Israel should have believed this word and known God’s ways, saying, “God, You should not let us die here in the wilderness. If You do this, how can Your word stand? We don’t care how

many giants are in the good land, or even if the good land is filled with evil angels. We will eat them up because You have promised to bring us to the land.” This is proper reasoning, the reasoning that is according to God’s ways, principles, faithfulness, and power. The Israelites did not reason in this way. Joshua and Caleb stood against that kind of reasoning, declaring that the people were well able to take the land. Joshua and Caleb honored God, and God, in turn, honored them for honoring Him. Nothing honors God more than our belief, and nothing dishonors and insults Him more than our unbelief. Unbelief issues in disobedience, obstinacy, and rebellion (Heb. 3:18) and provokes God (vv. 8, 16). Take today as the opportunity to soften your heart and listen to His voice. Be diligent to enter into this promised day, the Sabbath in the church life.” If in the day of the church, we hear His voice and do not harden our heart, we will never provoke and desert the living God. We will trust in Him and enter into the rest. Whenever we read the Bible, it must be living, energizing, and sharp enough to divide and discern all the things within us. If it is not, we have not touched the word of God but only the black and white letters. Every word in the Bible must be the living and operative word of God. We know that we have touched the word of God when the word we have touched is living, energizing, and dividing our soul from our spirit. The word of God must be living and operative and must divide our soul from our spirit. Brothers, I know why you are staggering and hesitating. It is because your soul is mixed with your spirit. Sometimes, when you are calm, deep within, your spirit is telling you to go on and follow Christ as today’s Messiah. Although you may be clear about this in your spirit, you turn from your spirit to your soul. Your mind in your soul begins to wonder, and this causes your soul to wander. Because your soul and spirit are mixed together, I have quoted the living word of God, which is sharper than a two-edged sword. It will pierce your mixture, divide your spirit from your soul, and show you how foolish you are. You should no longer wander in your soul; you must turn from your soul to your spirit. Don’t consider, talk, hesitate, or stagger. The more you talk and hesitate, the more you are in your wondering mind.” Many of us have had this experience. Before we came into the church life, we were wandering. Then we were attracted by the church, and deep within our spirit something said, “This is it.” But then our mind began to wonder, asking, “Is this right? If it is, then why haven’t the spiritual giants practiced it?” Under the influence of our background, we began wandering in the wilderness. However, in the calm of the night, something deeper than our mind stirred within us, saying, “The church life is right.” During such a time, it was difficult to sleep or work well. We only found rest when one day the living word of God came in to divide our being, revealing what was our spirit and what was our soul. **The living word of God must pierce into our being and separate all the mixture of soul and spirit. To enter into the church life we need to be pierced and divided by the living word of God.**¹

PRAYER
BURDENS

1. Pray for every saints’ experience of Christ, that with a believing heart He will bring us increasingly into the reality of the unsearchable riches of Christ as our land. . . .that the older saints and the young people would enter in the good land together.
2. Pray for the church’s care and service for the young people, that it would be filled with love, with much prayer in coordination and fellowship, serving together in oneness.
3. Pray for the 6th grade conference (Mansfield), that each YP’s salvation would be clear, strong, and with much consecration.
4. Pray for the church in Cincinnati, as they seek the Lord to secure a property for their meeting place.

We Need the Piercing and Dividing Of God's Living Word

It is easy for our spirit to be stuck to our soul. Because of this, we need the piercing and dividing of God's living word. We not only experience this upon first coming into the church life but often afterward. Many times God came in, and our spirit responded. However, our soul also reacted, mainly through our mind. The Lord may speak in our spirit and say, "Subject yourself to the church." But the sticky soul, speaking through the mind, says, "Be careful. Don't listen to the church so much. All the leading brothers have faults like anyone else. Look at Brother So-and-so. He's good, but he's not absolutely good." When our mind acts like this, we soon begin wandering. Only when the merciful and faithful God comes in with the piercing of the living word of God do we find deliverance from our wandering mind. This is why we need the Bible. If the Bible is not living and energizing whenever we read it, something is wrong. Although many Christians take the Bible only as a printed book, day by day we must take it in a living way. The living word of God is the outflow of the living God. It flows with the life of God (John 1:4), with the light of God (Psa. 119:105, 130), and even with God Himself (John 1:1). Because the Scriptures are breathed by God (2 Tim. 3:16), the word of God in the Scriptures is God's outflow. It brings the life of God, the light of God, and even God Himself into our being. Since the word of God is His outflow, being spirit and life (John 6:63), it is living. In our experience the whole Bible must not be dead letters but rather living as spirit and life. The living word of God is operative. Hence, *operative* here means "energizing or energetic." The living word of God is energizing within us to work out something for God.²

¹ 1975: Life-study of Hebrews (2nd ed.), msg. 25: An Evil Heart of Unbelief Deserting the Living God and the Living Word of God and the Parts of Man.

² 1975: Life-study of Hebrews (2nd ed.), msg. 25: An Evil Heart of Unbelief Deserting the Living God and the Living Word of God and the Parts of Man.