

# Encourage one another

## Hebrews 3:1-4:2

### Introduction

Who have been the people who have really been a source of encouragement for you personally? What made them this?

The letter to the Hebrews was a letter written as a word of exhortation or encouragement (see Hebrews 13:22) to believers who were in danger of being lead astray. The writer exhorts them to pay careful attention to the message of salvation that the Lord had announced to those who heard him so that they don't drift away from the faith (see Hebrews 2:1-4). The author, who is nameless, wrote to help them understand that the Lord Jesus is the fulfilment of all God's promises and all that we need.

Please read Hebrews 3:1 to 4:2. These verses are part of a longer section (3:1-4:13) that warn the believers who had started out on the journey of faith to be careful not to be like the Israelites in the wilderness who harden their

hearts and didn't enter God's rest. The author quotes Psalm 95:7-11 and applies it to believers he was writing to at the time. These words, of course, also continue to speak to believers today.

## Fix your thoughts on Jesus

Before looking at the example that the believers were not to follow the author highlights one that we are meant to be imitating.

1. Why ought we fix our thoughts on Jesus and what does it mean for us to do this (see also Hebrews 12:1-3)?

2. What is the evidence that we are members of God's household?

### Think about it

Many people believe that the letter was written to a largely Jewish church in Rome who were in danger of drifting from their faith in Jesus

because they were focusing on things to do with their old Jewish faith. We might not be in danger of being distracted from persevering in our faith because of these things today but we still need to be careful.

3. What are the things that might distract us and cause us to drift today?

## Be careful

As believers we need to be careful that we don't take our eyes and thoughts off Jesus, but we hold firmly to the faith we profess (4:14). As the writer says in chapter 4 and verse 1 while the promise of enter God's rest still stand, we need to be careful that none of us be found to have fallen short of it. An example of those who fell short of it were the Israelites. Their story is a sober warning to all of us. Please read Hebrews 3:1 - 4:2 where this warning is sounded.

4. The writer has quoted the second part of Psalm 95 in verses 7 to 11. Why has the author quoted this part of the psalm here in this

chapter? If you have time, it might be helpful to read the whole of Psalm 95.

5. What was wrong with the hearts of the Israelite generation that came out of Egypt with Moses (for more details please see Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 13 & 14)?

6. The author warned the brothers and sisters to watch out for their own hearts? What are the symptoms or the signs of a heart that is hardening towards God?

7. What makes sin so dangerous and how can we guard against this?

8. Why is perseverance in the faith which involves holding firmly to our confidence, hope and original conviction to the very end so important (see 3:6; 3:14; 4:1-2)?

9. Why are the Israelites an example of the importance of persevering to the very end (3:15-19; see also 4:11)?

### Think about it

The Greek verb (*parakaleo*) that has been translated “to encourage” in our NIV Bibles has a wide semantic range. In other words, there are several ways that it is sometimes translated. One NT scholar wrote that it can “include warning and reproof as well as encouragement and comfort”. It is sometimes translated “urge” or “exhort”. In chapter 13 and verse 22, the letter writer referred to his letter as his word of exhortation or encouragement (*paraklesis*).

10. What are we trying to do when we encourage others and how do we do this?

11. How does this sort of encouragement guard against the deceitfulness of sin (see also Hebrews 4:12)?

12. What gets in the way of such encouragement and how could we be doing this better? What are some practical steps we could be taking?