

Sermon: A Better Community: The Persevering People of God

Delivered by: Rev. Steven Lee, pastor of small groups and community outreach

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Bible text explored: Hebrews 3:12–19

¹²Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵As it is said,

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

¹⁶For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?

¹⁷And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. [ESV]

Review and application questions

1. Since these study notes from the Sunday morning sermon at College Church find primary use by small groups, if you’re reading this you are likely to belong to one. (*Factoid: According to Pastor Lee, there are 110 small groups in the life of College Church.*)
 - a. Can you share with the group one specific time / way that God has used this small group in your life in the past year?
 - b. If you were invited to speak to the congregation at College Church about small groups, what (briefly) would you say to make a compelling and interesting case for small group participation?
2. From an old hymn text: “*Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.*”
 - a. Trivia question: From what hymn does that line come?
 - b. How would you re-phrase that line in your own words? Is it true of you?
 - c. How does God use participation in a small group, or accountability with other friends or family members to address the tendency to wander from God?
3. “...[S]o that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin”. (He 3:13b) What does that mean?
 - a. In your own words and experience, what is one antidote to that hardening “*by the deceitfulness of sin*”? (He 3:13a)
4. Read He 3:7-11. What lesson do we have in the OT history of Israel in terms of the end result of their hardening “*by the deceitfulness of sin*”?
5. Pastor Lee spoke of the value of community and accountability in our walk with God, and likened the deceptiveness of sin to “bad breath...only your neighbor can tell you that you have it.” What did he mean by that? How have you seen that play out in your own life, to the ultimate glory of God?
6. Pastor Lee cautioned that “small groups aren’t about you”. From He 3:14, Who is the object and focus of our Christian community? How does that shape what your small group’s agenda is (and is not)?
7. What does it mean to “*hold our original confidence firm to the end*”? (He 3:14b)
8. “*Don’t be deceived but take hold of the community you have around you.*” (Pastor Lee). As a personal exercise, not necessarily to share with the group, think about, and thank God for, all the various communities you have around you, e.g., family, friends, small group, church. Pray that God would open your heart wider to what He is saying to you through those groups.