

The Encouragement of Others and the Deceitfulness of Sin
Hebrews 3:12-13

Hebrews is considered a very doctrinal book, necessitating an understanding of the Hebrew rituals of the Old Covenant and at least some working knowledge of the Old Testament. There are, however, a few verses that appear to be so immensely practical it could be from James or another New Testament book. The two verses that form our text are just such verses.

I. Take care that you not “fall away” from the living God.

What does it mean to “fall away” from God? Some are persuaded this means you lose grace. Some churches teach that you can be saved, then lost, but Christ is our propitiation (2:17). To fall away from God is *to find your satisfaction in something other than God Himself. Life is all about knowing and enjoying God.* He is the authentic source of real pleasure.

A. Take care ... this means that you must constantly ask where is the source of your joy.

B. Take collective care ... This care is collective, not just singular. The word “*brethren*” in verse 12 speaks of both a care for your own soul and a care for the souls of others.

It’s not just a concern for your friends, but a concern that “*there not be any one of you.*” Every church has a personality or a corporate spirit; an *esprit de corps* or atmosphere. It’s that something that is sensed. This should be *encouragement* through love and truth.

II. Encouraging one another in truth and love prevents falling away from God.

It is God who prevents you falling away into His condemnation because He is propitiated. The encouragement of people is required to keep you looking to God for pleasure (v.13).

A. Encouragement involves caring relationships.

The word encouragement (*parakaleo*) means “to come alongside and counsel.” Literally, the encourager is one who speaks “*the truth in love*” (Eph. 4:15) for another’s good.

B. Caring relationships require endurance.

“*Day after day*” is the way in which we come alongside a person who needs counsel. This is why *small* groups are important: Encouragement can come through teaching, but to come alongside a brother or sister in need of encouragement is important.

C. Endurance in relationships is for a purpose.

It is a purpose that is really twofold in nature: Enjoy God and avoid the deceit of sin.

III. Without encouragement the deceitfulness of sin causes you to fall away from God.

To understand verse 13 we must ask, “What is sin?” and then “How is sin deceitful?”

“*Sin is transgression of the law of God*” (I John 3:4). What is the law of God for your life?

“*His commandment is that you believe in Jesus Christ and love one another*” (I John 3:23).

Joy in life comes from a settled sense of God’s love and an eager expression of your love.

When you don’t rest in God’s love and express your love to others, you become deceived.

A. Sin deceives by appearing beautiful.

You think that which tempts you away from God and your family is good; it is not.

B. Sin deceives by giving you pleasure that feels lasting.

“*Sweet as honey in the mouth, but when in the stomach it was made bitter*” (Rev. 10:10).

C. Sin deceives by causing you to believe you are in control.

When any idol takes the place of God, that idol becomes the god in control of you.