**Hebrews 3:7-11**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/heb/heb-3/hebrews-37-11/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/heb/heb-3/hebrews-37-11/)

*Paul gives the example of the Israelites’ refusal to trust God that resulted in wandering in the desert for 40 years and never being able to enter the land that God promised them.*

This section is a direct quote from [Psalm 95:7-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+95.7-11&t=NASB95). The Psalm starts out as a call to worship and ends with a reminder of the penalty, the consequence for refusing to repent and acknowledge God, using the Israelites as an example. Paul is using this passage to implore his audience to not make this mistake of hardening their heart towards God. It is obvious from these verses that believers have a choice: we can choose to *harden our hearts* to God, and if we do there will be negative consequences.

These verses reference a time when Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and led them towards the land that God had promised so that they could take possession of it ([Genesis 17:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+17.8&t=NASB95)). The land was promised to them as an inheritance. When they came to that land, *in the day of trial in the wilderness,*they were afraid of the people who lived there and made plans to return to Egypt. Because they hardened their hearts against God and did not trust in His promises, He made them wander in the desert for *forty years*. That generation did not possess their inheritance.  Another word for inheritance is “possession.” You could also say that God gave them a possession, but they failed to possess their possession.

All those who hardened their hearts against God never took possession of the land God had promised to their fathers ([Numbers 14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14&t=NASB95)). This does not mean that the Lord deserted the Israelites. He cared for them while they wandered in the desert for 40 years, giving them food and clothing, but they missed out on an inheritance that was set aside for them; it was theirs to possess. They did not possess their inheritance because they did not exercise faith. The next generation did possess that possession, believing God and acting upon His promises. In a similar way, each believer has a great inheritance prepared for them, but it must be possessed through a walk of faith. Paul will make that point very clear.

It does not make sense to suggest that all of the Israelites who died in the desert were not believers and went to Hell; God cared for them, led them, and called them a redeemed people ([Exodus 15:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+15.13&t=NASB95)). However, they did not enter His rest (verse 11)—meaning they did not complete the work God gave them to do (which is when you should rest). God declares that they did not possess the land that had been promised to their fathers because t*hey always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways*—they hardened their hearts and did not believe God. This is not to suggest that they did not trust God for their deliverance – they believed God and the angel of death passed over them when they left slavery in Egypt. But they failed to believe God would successfully lead them into Canaan. Similarly, if believers (who have been justified in the presence of God by faith) choose to *harden their hearts* towards God and do not obey Him, they will likewise not take possession of their inheritance.

**7Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,  
“Today if you hear His voice,  
8 Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me,  
As in the day of trial in the wilderness,  
9 Where your fathers tried *Me* by testing *Me*,  
And saw My works for forty years.  
10 “Therefore I was angry with this generation,  
And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,  
And they did not know My ways’;  
11 As I swore in My wrath,  
‘They shall not enter My rest.’”**