

2,2,23 Heb. 3:7-19, The Rest (Part 2)

We'll start by reading through the part of Heb. 3 that we'll be studying tonight;

(Heb. 3:7-19) Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore, I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So, we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Before we look at the implications of this section of Hebrews, let's make sure we understand the primary message he's communicating.

First, this isn't the only passage in the New Testament showing us that the history of Israel has direct application to the spiritual life of a Christian.

(1 Cor. 10:1-6) Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples . . .

So, when Andy Stanley tells us that we should detach ourselves from the Old Testament, it would be wise not to take his advice.

In our passage in Heb. 3, here's what's clear from an overview of this passage;

- 1) God speaks to us, and when we hear His voice, we need to listen, not harden our hearts. He may speak inwardly in the Spirit or through our study of the

scriptures or through other believers or even donkeys, but however it comes to us, God's speaking must be received.

- 2) The Lord demonstrated His ways to His people in the wilderness generation for 40 years. God has revealed His ways, His faithfulness, His purpose to us in the course of our Christian lives.
- 3) If we listen selectively or if we harden our hearts to His guidance and instruction, there are consequences ranging from living out of fellowship with the Lord to discipline of some kind; but whatever discipline fits our rebellion, the greatest danger is failing to enter God's rest.

For Israel, the choice was obvious; "I have shown My faithfulness to you, now go into Canaan. My purpose for you is to conquer that land and displace those who live there."

Joshua and Caleb were all for going in – the rest of the nation didn't believe God would protect them, so they refused to go in.

The ongoing purpose of God for the nation of Israel continued, but that purpose was only fulfilled in a remnant; the majority failed to enter in, so they never experienced the continuing purpose of God, which was not just to deliver them from Egypt but to bring them to a land filled with milk and honey – for us that would be spiritual maturity; the abundant life Jesus offered to those who came to Him.

And don't forget that His view of "abundant life" and ours are not normally the same thing. To the Lord, Paul's life of poverty, sickness, loneliness and persecution coupled with a growing relationship with the Lord, and a consistent, increasing revelation of His eternal purpose, was exactly what those who know the Lord want more than anything else – life doesn't get more abundant than that.

Now, we can get more specific on the what and how of this.

I know that you have a history with the Lord and have gained spiritual insights over the years from your own study and from listening to pastors and teachers; so, you are aware of what it means for God to speak to you.

If you're like me, you also know what it means to disbelieve, to rebel, to harden our hearts and then through discipline to recover and find yourself a little more willing to listen than you were before. Those are fun times. (Psalm 119:71) "It was good for me to be afflicted, so that I might learn your statutes".

God never afflicts us without purpose – for those who want to grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord, the affliction is used to keep us on track when we begin to drift. For those who have more or less turned their back to God, the affliction is meant, first, as a means of getting their attention, and if they remain obstinate, they will either be put on the shelf and live out their lives in spiritual death, or they may be taken to heaven prematurely.

Before we continue with the Old Testament example of Israel, I want to share something that I feel points out one of the most consistent and subtle ways we sabotage ourselves in this issue of drifting away from spiritual life. It's a commentary on 1 Cor. 2:16 which says, "We have the mind of Christ".

You probably remember that in the introduction to Hebrews a few weeks ago, I talked about the alien world we were brought into when we became Christians – that we are not of *this* world. This quote explains the same principle but from the angle of the natural versus the spiritual mind.

Our natural mind is a great obstacle in the race which we are running, cropping up all the time with its arguments, its interests and its methods. When the Corinthians were brought into the Church, they left behind their obvious sins, but they carried over into their new realm the old, natural ways of thinking and reasoning which belonged to the world and not to the Spirit of God. The apostle confronted them with: "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), urging them to allow the Cross to be planted between the natural mind and the spiritual. We shall only come to the fullness of Christ as we leave behind the mind of the natural man and move on in the progress of the mind of Christ. On everything; every judgment, every conclusion, every analysis, every appraisal; we must ask the Lord: "Is that Your mind, Lord, or is it mine?" We may sometimes feel that we have the strongest ground for taking up a certain attitude or coming to a certain conclusion; we may feel that we have all the evidence and so are convinced; and yet we may be wrong.

The man who wrote the letter to the Corinthians knew from deep and bitter experience that this was the case. "I verily thought... that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," he said (Acts 26:9). There was no man who had stronger convictions as to the rightness of his course than Saul of Tarsus. The great revolution which took place in him when he came to Christ was that he had to say: "I have been wrong in my

fundamental way of thinking." After that confession he made good headway in the race because he was always ready to subject his thinking to the jurisdiction of his crucified Lord. This is the way of spiritual progress. We shall not get very far while we hold to our own opinions and our own conclusions, even though we may have the support of others; we have to learn to conquer our natural mind by submission to the mind of Christ. This is most important if we are concerned about spiritual progress.

As with everything else in life, in this issue of moving from Egypt to Canaan (from salvation to maturity) we are our worst enemies. And *our* battle is not with Canaanites, but is a battle fought in our minds centered in listening or not listening and believing or not believing.

It's like Kierkegaard once said, "There are two ways to be deceived: one is to believe what isn't true, the other is to refuse to believe what is true."

Another way to see all of this is to start with the intent that we are going to agree with what the Lord tells us whether it fits with what we want or with what we *used* to think or not. As Amos 3:3 reminds us; "How can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" If we want to walk with the Lord, we can't be constantly questioning and challenging what He's doing and saying.

Christ is the place of God's rest (for us rest is not Canaan, it's the Lord) which means that our perfect rest will only be found in our relationship with Christ being one of agreement, and a relationship founded on the "he that loses his life for My sake" principle of full surrender.

This is why our Lord said in Matt. 11:28; "Come unto Me and learn of Me and you will find rest for your souls" – He is the place of rest and the more we learn of Him, the more our soul will find rest.

In the light of what we've seen so far, think again about what differentiated Joshua and Caleb from the rest of Israel. They were the only two who were absolutely committed to God's purpose for the nation. They had no desire for either Egypt or the Wilderness – they understood what God wanted and they gave themselves completely to that.

When we take that to the New Testament, we know that the purpose of God is full conformity to Christ through spiritual growth. Nothing else is as important to the Lord as this, because His singular purpose for all of us that we become conformed

to the image of His Son so that God can finally have a race of people created in His image (“Let us make Man in our image and let him have dominion”).

I won't tangent on this for now, because we've seen in many of our studies how this single purpose of God in our generation has been either redefined, lost completely, or replaced with a smorgasbord of purposes (plural) depending on the church or denomination.

But God's purpose remains the same, and in every generation there is a remnant of overcomers like Joshua and Caleb who understand exactly what God is after and give themselves completely to see it realized.

The wilderness represents the season of our lives characterized by the testing of this relationship to see what we want it ultimately to be. Some want that relationship to be centered in us – this is the Laodicean mindset. But some want Christ to be all in all – everything, with us decreasing and Him increasing.

Here's some input by Sparks on that;

What is spiritual growth? What is spiritual maturity? What is it to go on in the Lord? I fear we have got mixed ideas about this. Many think that spiritual maturity is a more comprehensive knowledge of Christian doctrine, a larger grasp of scriptural truth, a wider expanse of the knowledge of the things of God; and many such features are recorded as marks of growth, development, and spiritual maturity. . . The hallmark of true spiritual development and maturity is this: that we have grown so much less and the Lord Jesus has grown so much more. The mature soul is one who is small in his or her own eyes, but in whose eyes the Lord Jesus is great. That is growth. We may know a very great deal, have a wonderful grasp of doctrine, of teaching, of truth, even of the Scriptures, and yet be spiritually very small, very immature, very childish. (There is all the difference between being childish and child-like.) Real spiritual growth is just this: I decrease, He increases. It is the Lord Jesus becoming more. You can test spiritual growth by that.

Canaan was Israel's destiny. It was where Jerusalem would be established; the place where God's presence in His temple would be. As we saw, most of those who escaped Egypt had hardened their hearts to God's destiny for them in Canaan – they would never experience what Joshua's generation experienced in displacing the tribes in that land and paving the way for the kingdom of David who was a type of Christ.

The application for us is that, even though most believers neither understand nor want God's destiny for us, a remnant absolutely *does* want that and is willing to lose anything and everything to see Christ have His will established in their hearts and His bride prepared to share His kingdom at His return.

If we want to be the Joshua's and Caleb's of our generation, we have to drop anything in our lives, or our Christianity, that competes with a single-minded point of view which is in perfect sync with God's purpose for us which is attaining conformity to Christ.

(2 Pet. 3:18) “. . . grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

The *goal* is to be conformed to His image, the *means* to achieve that goal is growth in our knowledge of Christ.

But here's where we can get tripped up. We think that our part of growing in the knowledge of the Lord is studying the Bible, but that's only part of the picture; the way we “learn of Him” is through relationship; it has to be experiential, not just theological.

(John 5:39-40) “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”

All of these experiences of life the Lord takes us through in our Wilderness are designed for us to learn of Him in a very personal way where everything we study is tested and brought into our lives experientially. Our relationship with the Lord will be as unique and individual as we are.

If you've ever been in a serious, Spirit-led prayer meeting, you can hear that uniqueness of relationship with Christ in the prayers.

While we're in our Wilderness, our knowledge of Christ is scattered and often confusing. But when we more fully lose our lives for Him and for His purpose, like Joshua did, things begin to clear up and we see Him as He is. This personal, experiential knowledge of the Lord is our inheritance. Israel got land – we get the Son of God.

In this age of deception, the enemy has convinced the church that the wilderness is the place of destiny, that the wilderness experience is as good as it gets. As

we've seen many times before – Christianity has become the goal, and Christ is acknowledged in Name only.

This is no different than erecting a golden calf in the wilderness as an imitation god to give us what we want instead of what we need.

Now, I think it's important to do some qualifiers. For example, even though we are told we must press on through the wilderness to Canaan, from infancy to maturity, this is God's work, not ours. But we still have to know what cooperating with Him in this work implies.

It starts with this; we have to know we are accepted as we are. He's not waiting until we reach maturity to smile on us.

Listen to Stanford's explanation of how important this is;

Here are two questions every believer must settle as soon as possible. One is, 'does God fully accept me?' and if so, on what basis does He do so? What devastation often permeates the life of a believer who is not sure of being accepted. (Rom. 5:1) 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'. Our peace, our acceptance, is based solely on the work of the Cross totally apart from anything whatsoever in or from us. When we feel unaccepted due to a consciousness of sin, God has not altered. We may need to be restored to fellowship, but God has never changed in His love and acceptance of us. There is nothing about us to commend us to God. To believe, and to be content to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret.

I'm going to add something by Norman Douty because he shows clearly that *building* on the ground of acceptance is done by exactly the same principle that brought us into that acceptance in the first place.

If I am to become like God then in His grace, He must do it. And the sooner I come to recognize that, the sooner I will be delivered from the bondage of self-expectation. You have been in the arena, you have been endeavoring, you are a failure, come out and sit down and as you sit there behold Him, look at Him. Don't try to be like Him, just look at Him. Just be occupied with Him. Forget about trying to be like Him. Just behold Him through the Word. Come to the Word for one purpose and that is to meet the Lord. Make it to be a means, not of scholarship, but of fellowship with Christ; for as the apostle wrote (2 Cor. 3:17-18) 'The Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of

the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.’ It was Mary, not Martha, who chose wisely.

Earlier, I said that the secret of rest is when we come to realize that Christ is meant to be all and in all. I’m sure they didn’t understand the full meaning of why He said this, but Jesus told His disciples this truth prior to His death.

(John 14:6) ‘Lord,’ said Thomas, ‘. . . how can we know the way?’ Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life.’

We enter by Christ; we walk in the way of life by His Spirit and we enter fullness of life through Him. He is all three. As we’ll see in Heb. 12:2 “. . . looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” He’s the Alpha and the Omega.

The rest is a destination and the destination is a relationship with a Person. (Phil. 1:21) “For me, to live is Christ.”

This place of living in Christ has a definite effect on us; as this author put it;

There is great glory to the Lord in a quiet, confident walk in a day of adversity when things around us are shaking and trembling.

Let’s imagine that like Joshua and Caleb we have entered Canaan; we have understood God’s destiny for us spiritually as being a place where we are fully assured of our acceptance, of God’s unchanging love for us and where Christ has become more important to us than anything or anyone else.

When Joshua took Israel into the place of rest, the place of their inheritance; their conflict didn’t decrease, it increased. Through all they had learned they knew rest inwardly, but outwardly the storms were greater than ever.

There are no believers more hated and feared by the enemy that those who are moving into conflict with the principalities and powers who have taken this world, and much of the church, captive through deception. The mature believer recognizes those enemies when others can’t, and with the sword of the spirit, he exposes, dethrones them and frees their captives.

(Eph. 5:11) “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”

(2 Tim. 2:26) “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

All you have to do is look at Paul’s life in 2 Cor. 11 to see the myriad of ways the enemy assaulted his body and circumstances to discourage and defeat him.

But Paul was in spiritual Canaan and he knew exactly why he was there and what he was called to do;

(Act 26:15-18) “So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’”

When we reach the place spiritually in this life where we are a serious threat to the enemy’s deceptions, our Canaanite conflict increases exponentially. Listen to these comments by Sparks on this;

Every bit of truth we receive, if we receive it in a living way, it will take us into conflict and will be established through conflict. It will be worthless until there has been a battle over it. Take any position the Lord calls you to take, and if you are taking it with Him, you are going through things in it, and there will be an element added because of the battle. You have taken a position, but you may not have really got it yet, the real value of it has not been tested and proved in you. You have not come into the real significance of it until there has been some intense conflict in relation to it.

So, one thing he’s saying is that we don’t really know the full significance of what we are learning until we are forced, in battle, to apply it. And we don’t know all the reasons why we are learning something until we see the fruit in the deliverance of another person caught in the enemy’s deception.

I want to try to come from as many angles as possible on this because of how important it is and because it's a major theme of Hebrews; so here's another approach.

Those who have pursued and eventually entered the rest have, at some point, realized that when we say the rest is a Person, one of the things we mean is that we are increasingly seeing things through His eyes instead of our own.

We could call that 'spiritual intelligence'. The reason for not simply saying something like 'theological or Biblical knowledge' is because it's possible to be a doctrinal genius and have memorized nearly the whole Bible and still be a spiritual infant.

We're not there yet, and I'll dig deeper when we get there, but there's a familiar verse in Heb. 5:14 that sums this up (I'll paraphrase it for now);

"Full grown men are those who by reason of use have their spiritual senses exercised to discern good and evil (and truth from deception)"

There's no short cut to what the author says is "by reason of use". By reason of using our spiritual senses in trial and error over a lifetime, a mature believer becomes aware of when he is seeing something as a spiritual insight or just a mental insight.

If it's a spiritual insight based on learned spiritual intelligence, it's seeing through the Lord's eyes.

As we go through Hebrews, we will see a lot of the details of the Old Testament types and shadows. I was able to locate some comments on this in a review of Hebrews I found online;

The apostle is seeking to bring these Hebrew believers to a recognition of how Christ embodies all of the Mosaic symbols spiritually, and has all its fulfilment in Him. Now understanding, is to be able to see in Christ the practical, spiritual value of every fragment of the Mosaic economy. So that, as you look into the Lord Jesus with spiritually enlightened eyes, you are seeing that to the most minute detail of that whole order under Moses, you have a value in Christ for practical spiritual purposes now. And to be able to discern that, and extract that, and live in the good of that represents spiritual maturity, growth, and understanding. We may know all the typology, and yet for it to mean nothing more than mental knowledge.

I can give another example of this idea of seeing spiritual reality through the eyes of the Lord;

(John 4:21-23) “Woman, believe Me, the hour comes, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father... the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth...”

Then a commentator wrote on this;

The outward system, whether it is in Samaria or Moriah in Jerusalem, is past. ‘The hour cometh, and now is’. What hour? The Son has come! "God, having of old times spoken unto the fathers in the prophets... has, at the end of these days, spoken unto us in a Son" (Heb. 1:1). It is all in the Son! The portions are gone; the system, the outward, the earthly, as such, passes away and Christ is the Temple, Christ is the Priest, the Sacrifice, and the Feasts.

What the author to the Hebrews was trying to do was detach his readers from an earthly, religious system to carry them to Christ in heaven and in them. What is true of Him in us, and us in Him, is that now everything is meant to be heavenly and spiritual – not earthly or any kind of religious system, whether Judaism or Christianity.

Someday, that’s going to make sense to all of us and we will see clearly which is which in the Christendom around us. Hopefully, that will happen in this life. And when it does, we will be living in the good of genuine spiritual intelligence.

When we get to chapters 5 & 6 we’ll see that those who are wrapped up in an earthly, organized, religious system of any kind (Christian or otherwise) have not entered into the spiritual value of what Hebrews is communicating and they are children, not full grown or even *going* on, but limited and stagnant like Sardis.

And for them, it would be impossible to even understand the command given to us in Heb. 13:13, let alone obey it;

“Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

As Spark explains it; this verse is saying,

Let us go outside of what is merely an earthly, popular religious system, so we can have our life with and in Christ alone. A spiritual people, a heavenly

people, not of this world, with no connection at all with this world, except the connection and obligation we have to bring light into darkness.

Now, let's go back to our original passage. The last two verses in chapter 3 are verses 18 & 19;

“And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So, we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

We will obviously be covering “faith” more extensively in chapter 11, but for now we need to see how faith is connected to our rest in Christ.

What, specifically, did Israel do that was disobedience? The Lord told them to enter into Canaan; their inheritance. They refused to go in for two reasons;

1) They still had Egypt (in other words, their past) in their hearts;

(Numbers 14:3-4) “Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will become plunder. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt? So, they said to one another, “Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.”

This was the disobedience of the Hebrews in the letter we're studying – they wanted the safety of 1st. century Judaism instead of the persecution of Christians (at the time Hebrews was written, Judaism was still legal in the Roman world, but Christianity was becoming increasingly under attack).

2) They were unwilling to trust the Lord with their future;

We have to start with the assumption that each of us wants to know and do the will of God more than anything else – that obedience is our highest priority. I'm not talking about the *ability* to do this; I'm talking about our desire or intent.

If it's our genuine desire to obey any guidance or light the Lord gives to us, then we will make it through our seasons of failure.

So, where does faith come into this? Faith is dependence on God to accomplish His will; it's moving according to what we believe is His will with a mindset of both surrender to Him, and dependence on Him for the outcome. Because as we're told in Phil. 2:12-13;

“Just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, continue the outworking of your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to will and to act on behalf of His purpose.”

The reason I’m beginning with this is because when we take a realistic look at the fact that obedience to God’s will is essential (not optional) to enter His rest, a sense of inadequacy or guilt can overtake us if we think it’s up to us to enter fully into what He’s asking of us.

To be honest and accurate with our passage in Hebrews, we can’t downplay the importance of obedience.

There’s a huge difference between saying to ourselves, “I feel totally inadequate for this” versus “So, I’m not going to even try”.

The reason I’m sharing this is because in all of our lives, the Lord will ask us to take certain steps (usually baby steps because He knows us), to move into the next phase of our training and spiritual development. If we cooperate, we advance; if we rebel; we stop growing.

That was Israel – Joshua and Caleb went in; the rest did not.

So, here’s our passage in Hebrews again;

“And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So, we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

You can see now the close tie in between obedience and faith. Our obedience or lack thereof is usually based on not believing that what the Lord is asking of us is a good idea, or that it’s something we can reasonably expect success in doing.

Which is why I read the Philippian’s passage – it doesn’t matter what we might think we are or aren’t capable of doing; all that matters is knowing and believing that if the Lord has asked this of us, He’s going to provide the resources we need to obey Him.

We need to close, so I’ll wrap up with these comments by Adrian Rogers on the situation Israel faced when they refused to enter Canaan.

Unbelief is what locked the doors of the Promised Land to the children of Israel. For all the grumbling, bad attitudes, and discontentment that

characterized their demeanor after leaving Egypt, it was their unbelief that kept them at a distance from God's promised reward. Jesus, too, allowed the people's unbelief to tie His hands on His ministry visit to His hometown. The Bible clearly says, "He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:58). The sovereign God has limited Himself to work according to the faith and belief of the people of God. Faith is by far the greatest asset we have. Unbelief, on the other hand, is our greatest stumbling block in life. Unbelief is the chief wickedness. Unbelief is the sin of all sins. Unbelief caused Eve to sin against God in the Garden of Eden. She failed to believe the Word of God.

We'll stop for now, but just remember that the faith that moves us into any act of obedience is not a faith-in-self attitude, but a mistrust of self coupled with a dependence on the Lord to honor our obedience and see us through.

We may have doubts, fears, questions and a million other things plaguing our minds when we are faced with a choice about God's will, but the second we move into action, God overlooks all our weaknesses and doubts, and moves in to carry us forward.

Here's a couple of brief excerpts from a book called "Gentle and Lowly" by Dane Ortlund. The first is a one-sentence reminder of what I touched on earlier when I shared some comments by Miles Stanford on God's absolutely acceptance of us;

It is the most counterintuitive aspect of Christianity, that we are declared right with God, not when we begin to get our act together, but when we collapse into honest acknowledgment that we never will.

I believe it was Newell that said; "Our willingness to be loved while unworthy is the great secret (of resting in Christ)".

This last paragraph is from the same book by Ortlund;

When you look at the older saints in your church, how do you think they got there? Sound doctrine, yes. Resolute obedience, without a doubt. Suffering without becoming cynical, for sure. But maybe there's another reason, maybe the deepest reason is that they have, over time, been won over in their deepest affections to a gentle Savior. Perhaps they have simply tasted, over many years, the surprise of a Christ for whom their very sins draw him in, rather than push him away. Maybe they have come to know that Jesus really does love them just as they are.