

Hardened Hearts

“BUT EXHORT ONE ANOTHER . . . LEST ANY OF YOU BE HARDENED THROUGH THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN” — HEBREWS 3:13



Today we are going to examine the dangers of hardening our hearts towards God. The Scriptures give examples of both the redeemed, as well as the unredeemed, hardening their hearts. When the writers of Scripture talk about a hardened heart they are talking about the hardness of our inner soul that is resisting the will of Almighty God.

Men and women can stubbornly resist God.

A hardened heart does not happen overnight. In the natural realms, we can harden our hands and feet through friction. The more our skin is rubbed our skin thickens, forming callouses. These hardened surfaces become insensitive to the touch.



Exodus 8:19

“Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.”



Psalms 95:8-9

“Harden not your heart, . . . as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.”

Mark 8:17

“And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto *His disciples*, have ye your heart yet hardened?”

In like manner, when we continually resist the will of God: i.e. His calling and His word, our hearts will grow cold and hardened towards God.

For the redeemed, this hardening can result in the loss of blessing and rewards, and in some cases, even the loss of their physical life. For the unredeemed it will ultimately end with the loss of eternal life and heavens glory.

So, what is it that makes us so stubborn? What is it that causes us to dig in our heels so deep that we would be willing to give up everything, even our life.

Are we guilty of hardening our hearts towards God? Are we guilty of callousing our conscience through sin and stubbornness? Has our hearing of God's word been dulled? Has the whisperings of the Holy Spirit's leading been silenced?

THIS LESSON WILL EXAMINE THESE QUESTIONS AND PROVIDE GOD'S ANSWER TO THESE ISSUES.

1. 2 Chronicles 14:1-5 — What kind of king was Asa?

2 Chronicles 16:1-3, 7-9, 10 — What hardened Asa's heart?

2 Chronicles 16:12-13 — How long did he resist God?

What kind of warning does this account provide for us?

ANSWER:

- a. King Asa, the godly king of Judah, hardened his heart against God.
- b. He was angry with the Prophet of God because he rebuked him for trusting in Syrian's army instead of God. Asa was so enraged that he put the prophet in prison. It seems he continued in his resistance when he oppressed other people who sided with the prophet.
- c. This continued even when Asa contracted a serious disease in his feet.

"And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. ¹³ And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign." 2 Chron. 16:12-13

2. Psalm 95:8-11 and Deuteronomy 9:6-7 speak of Israel being a stiff-necked people who hardened their hearts to the Lord. Their stubborn resistance resulted in the 1st generation dying in the wilderness (except Caleb and Joshua). What caused them to harden their hearts? What kind of people were they that died in the wilderness? Were they saved or lost? (Hebrews 3:18-19; 4:2)

ANSWER:

For forty years Israel stubbornly resisted God. A whole generation died in the wilderness because they resisted God. They were stubborn and hardened their hearts. Their disobedience caused that

generation to lose the blessing of entering the Promised Land. Their stubbornness resulted in a loss of rewards.

Reasons for hardening their hearts:

1. Lack of faith in God: They doubted God's ability, and His care for them.

Hebrews 3:18-19 — "And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

2. They failed to mix what they learned and experienced into a living faith.

Hebrews 4:2 "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

They are examples of a people who are redeemed. Remember, Israel was delivered from bondage. It was not a redemptive problem for even Moses died in the wilderness. The problem was disobedience and their failure to live by faith. Their lack of faith resulted in losing the reward of settling in the Promised Land. Instead, they remained and died in the wilderness.

3. **What was the cause of the disciples hardness in Mark 8:17-19? How was this hardness affecting them spiritually?**

ANSWER:

Even the disciples of our Lord had dulled their senses because they set their sights on the cares of this world. The Lord pointed out that their focus on the cares of this world had hardened their hearts to his teaching.

4. **Summarize what we learned from the passages above.**

ANSWER:

- a. First, believers can harden their hearts to the will of God.
- b. Second, we learned that one of the items that harden hearts is pride. We saw this with King Asa. He did not like being called out by the Prophet of God. He knew that Judah should not make a league with other nations, but he did it anyways. By doing so He placed his trust in men and in armies rather than in God.

The more God's people resisted him the more stubborn he became.

- c. Third, we find that even the cares of this world can distract us and harden us to hearing God's call and His word.

Death, illness, controversy, or even getting caught up in the daily details of life can hardened us as it did the disciples of Christ.

5. The very depth of the heart is amazing. Men can be so stubborn that even in the face of death they can continue to resist and rebel. **Read Revelation 9:13-21 and discuss what it is that made these men so hard.**

ANSWER:

- A good example of this is found in Revelation 9 where over ½ the world is destroyed. Unredeemed mankind is faced with the acceptance or rejection of the gospel. Yet Scripture says, (Revelation 9:20-21)

“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: ²¹ Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.” – Revelation 9:20-21

6. One last example. Look up Ex. 7:22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7 & 1 Samuel 6:6. **What made Pharaoh and the Egyptians so stubborn and hard?**

ANSWER:

1. Ex. 7:22 And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and **Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said.
2. Ex. 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, **he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them**; as the LORD had said.
3. Ex. 8:19 Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: **and Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.
4. Ex. 8:32 **And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time** also, neither would he let the people go.
5. Ex. 9:7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. **And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.**
6. In I Samuel 6:6 – says, the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their own heart against God.

“Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?”

7. **What are the main culprits that harden hearts to God's leading?** (1 Tim. 4:1-2; Hebrews 3:13; Proverbs 11:2; 13:10; 14:3; 16:18; 29:23)

ANSWER:

So, it seems that both the redeemed, as well as the unredeemed can harden their hearts. For the redeemed, it can result in the loss of blessing and rewards, and in some cases, even the loss of their physical life. For the unredeemed it will ultimately end with the loss of eternal life and heavens glory.

Causes:

a. The World:

Worldly cares can dull our ability to perceive and understand God's word. Trials, such as a loss of a loved one and illness can dull our hearing and begin the hardening process.

b. Continual sin:

Continual sin along with demonic deception can hardened us.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ² Speaking lies in hypocrisy; **having their conscience seared with a hot iron**” – 1 Tim. 4:1-2.

Sin is the breaking of God’s law. Knowingly resisting God and sinning it time can hardened our hearts.

Heb. 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be **hardened** through the deceitfulness of sin.

c. Pride:

Speaking of Nebuchadnezzar “But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him” – Dan. 5:20-21

Prov. 11:2 When **pride** cometh, then cometh shame

Prov. 13:10 Only by **pride** cometh contention:

Prov. 14:3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of **pride**:

Prov. 16:18 **Pride** goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Prov. 29:23 A man’s **pride** shall bring him low:

8. How do we keep our hearts sensitive to God’s leading?

ANSWER:

Psalms 139:23-24 – “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalms 119:9-11 – ‘Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. ¹⁰ With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. ¹¹ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”