

Mark 8:14-26 — “Spiritual Dullness & Hard-Heartedness & What You Must Do About It”

Jonathan Edwards taught that spiritual dullness grips a Christian and even a church “when the realities of God and his gospel grow so dim, and unbelief and worldly affections so strong, that the heart of the church wanders into the lusts and rivalries of a secularized mind.”

Our Lord has . . .
 many weak children in His family,
 many *dull* pupils in His school,
 many *raw* soldiers in His army,
 many *lame* sheep in His flock.

Yet He bears with them all, and casts none away!

Happy is that Christian who has learned to deal likewise with his brethren. There are many in the Church, who, like Thomas, are dull and slow — but for all that, like Thomas, are real and true believers. (JC Ryle)

- What about us? how can we have “hardness of heart?” How can we be spiritually dull?
 - ❖ by laziness/sluggishness
 - ❖ by selfishness
 - ❖ by forgetfulness
 - ❖ by worldliness

- A key verb in v.17b - do you have a **hardened** heart? [it is *the* emphatic verb in our section.]
- From this text, we’ll see the spiritual dullness & hard-heartedness ***explained*** and then ***illustrated***.

THESIS — You & I must *guard/beware from spiritual dullness & hard-heartedness.

The hardness of the disciples’ heart is:

Explained & rebuked (14-21)

Illustrated & remedied (22-26)

I. Spiritual dullness & hard-heartedness EXPLAINED & REBUKED (14-21)

A. the disciples HARD-HEARTEDNESS!

B. The Master’s HEART-AWARENESS!

- Jesus quotes/uses OT scriptures — Ezek 12.2; Jer. 5.21 and Isa 6.9-10!

II. Spiritual dullness & hard-heartedness ILLUSTRATED & REMEDIED (22-26)

❖ It is my understanding of this *unique* miracle (only in Mark) that it is Only understood *in its context*.

- ✓ The miracle for the man became a parable for the 12.
- ✓ The healing for the man became an illustration for the 12.
- ✓ The physical progression for the man in his physical sight was illustrative of the spiritual progression of the 12 in their spiritual sight.

The miracle:**The meaning:**

1. the miracle for the man becomes a parable for the disciples.
2. The man sees a bit better — but not fully.
3. The disciples are growing a bit — but not fully.

SO WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

answer: we as God’s people must heed these 4 paramount reminders:

1. we are to be **holding fast** to the HEAD - Jesus - COL 2.19 - CLING to Christ!
2. we are to be **growing** in the body of Christ - EPH 4.16 - GROW with believers!
3. we are to be built up in **brotherly love** - EPH 4.16 - MATURE in love!
4. we are to be growing, which **comes from GOD** - COL 2.19b - MIND God’s Power!

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To fight against spiritual dullness and spiritual hard-heartedness, we must: **Consider the Majesty of God**

- If you desire to rise above slothfulness then strive to keep yourself under high and majestic thoughts of God. I am sure that the low conceptions we have of the majesty of God are the reason why many of us bow our knee so seldom to Him. (Andrew Murray)

A CHARGE TO KEEP I HAVE

1 A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

2 To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
Oh, may it all my pow'rs engage
To do my Master's will!

3 Arm me with watchful care
As in Thy sight to live,
And now Thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give!

4 Help me to watch and pray,
And still on Thee rely,
Oh, let me not my trust betray,
But press to realms on high

— Charles Wesley

CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS

Crown Him with many crowns, The Lamb upon His throne.
Hark! How the heav'nly anthem drowns All music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing Of Him who died for thee;
And hail Him as thy matchless king Through all eternity!

Crown Him the Lord of Heav'n, Enthroned in worlds above,
Crown Him the king to whom is giv'n The wondrous name of Love.
Crown Him with many crowns, As thrones before Him fall;
Crown Him, ye kings, with many crowns, For He is king of all.