

The Danger Of A Hardened Heart

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The Texts

7 Therefore, 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.'"

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart
that falls away from the living God

13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that
none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

15 while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

16 For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?

19 So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of may seem to have come short of it.

2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS";

5 and again in this passage, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST."

6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,

7 He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

(Hebrews 3:7-4:7, NASB)

1 Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest?

2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. Hypocrisy Rebuked (Isaiah 66:1-2, NASB)

Why Now?

- A Key Reason Behind “Christian Deconstruction”
- Helps us to understand much of what we’ve been hearing in the book of Numbers
- It is a “Condition of the Soul”, all too often disregarded
- Periodic need to warn of dangers to the Flock (Acts 20:26-27)
- To call the Flock to take practical steps to avoid that danger

An Overview of the Text

- A Danger To Be Avoided — The “Hardening” (sklaros, ongoing) of the Heart (Hebrews 3:8, 15, 4:7). Ultimately, Unbelief. (Hebrews 3:19; 4:2-3)
- An Urgency to be Emphasized — “Today”, “The Time of Grace”, NOW! (Hebrews 3:7, 15, 4:7)
- Consequences of “Hardening” to Be Avoided
 - Inability to “hear” the Voice of God
 - God’s Angry Oath
 - Barred from “Entering His Rest” (Canaan, Heaven)

Overview Of the Text

- Action(s) to Be Taken
 - “Take Care”, “See to It” “Beware” (3:12) (present tense imperative)
 - “Encourage One Another day after day” (3:13) (present tense imperative)
 - “Fear” that any of us may fall short of entering His rest (4:1)
- The “Deceitfulness (stratagem) of Sin” (John 8:44) — Lies to Avoid:
 - Jesus was not God, not the Promised Christ
 - Unlimited time to Repent
 - God will not provide for our needs.

“Hardening” ??

- Ongoing
- “Hearts of Stone” now encased in Concrete, e.g. Granite in Cement
- Insensitive to the Spirit, to the Things of God
- The Heart that will not Persevere
- The Opposite of the Broken and Contrite Heart to Whom God will look (Isaiah 66:2)

Care in the Use of the Metaphor

- Comparable to the pulmonary, circulatory “hardening”, or blockage, of vessels leading to the human heart, at times fatal unless action is taken
- Greater than the hardening of a kidney stone, or gall stone. “The most dreadful judgment of God that can be set upon a man or woman here.”
— Jeremiah Burroughs
- A distinction between a preliminary hardening and a final hardening (Mark 6:52)

- The hardening of ice, or wax, as compared to that of a stone, or clay.
(Burroughs, MacArthur) “The sun that softens wax will harden clay.”
— Jack, John, MacArthur
- The insensitivity, or hardening, of a callus on your foot as distinct from a fatal hardening of the physiological heart.

Pertinent Paradoxes

- The Sovereignty of God and the Responsibility of Man
- Who does the “Hardening” of the Heart?
 - Pharaoh? God? Ten times each (MSB Note on Exodus 4:21-23)
- “Irresistible Grace” and the admonition to not “harden our hearts”
- Saved irreversibly, when truly elect and regenerate (Romans 8:29-30; John 5:24), yet called to give evidence by persevering (Hebrews 3:14)

Biblical Examples

- The Israelites at Massah/Meribah (Psalm 95; Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:1-13)
- The man who hardens his neck after much reproof . A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy. (Proverbs 29:1)
- He is wise in heart and mighty in strength—who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?— (Job 9:4)

Biblical Examples

- Judas Iscariot
- The false disciples in John 6
- The “rogue” elders in Acts 20 who would eventually pervert the truth for selfish advantage
- Hymenaeus and Alexander (I Timothy 1:20)
- Demas
- Sometimes from the highest positions within the Church

Practical Steps to Take

- Remember
 - The paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility
 - What God has done during times of difficulty
 - The importance of perseverance within the faith

Practical Steps to Take

- Understand the danger of a hardened heart and take precautions
 - Pray for a softened heart
 - Don't overcomplicate it. ("I repent. When do I start counseling?")
 - Avoid "heart hardening" company
- Act in a timely manner. The importance of "Now!"

Practical steps to Take

- Avoid Complacency within the Body
 - Beware
 - Encourage one another
- Avoid focusing exclusively on the physical, the material that you are experiencing

Practical Steps to Take

- Avoid a lack of respect for those in spiritual authority.
- Avoid Grumbling and Complaining
- Shun Human Pride like the Plague. The “root of bitterness”
- Recognize and avoid the “deceitfulness of sin.”
- Focus on, and treasure, the Word of God (Isaiah 66:2; John 6:68)

Conclusion

Have I closed with Christ? Have I truly recognized and embraced Him as savior and Lord?

Am I, in any way, self-deceived and indulging in a lifestyle of ongoing, continuing sin?

Am I buying into **any** of the lies of the Evil One?

Am I truly treasuring His Word? Is my heart “tender” to the Word of God?

Finally, are there any in my sphere of fellow believers who need to be encouraged in this area?