

Hardness of Heart

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The Bible says in Ephesians 4:17,

"...Walk no longer as the Gentiles also walk in the futility of their mind (to live without the illumination of God) being darkened in their understanding excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart (a covering with a callous fig, blindness) and, they, having become callous have given themselves over to sensuality..."

Hardness of heart can block salvation, healing and deliverance. For many years, I have not understood why some people who are professing believers take off with what they hear of the Lord and His Word, get healed and delivered and others seem to get nothing. I have watched people sit under the Word year after year and be fruitless in their walk with God and others not only take what they hear and get changed but are instruments God uses to change others.

What most of us consider the normal Christian life is abnormal from God's point of view. Jesus said in Mark 4, Matthew 13 and Luke 8 in the parable of the sower that there are four kinds of people He describes as soil types. He says "the seed is the Word of God." In the first type of soil, the seed which goes forth from the mouth of the sower falls beside the road where the birds (satan) come and steal the Word. This is a picture of a person who hears the Word and because of his lack of understanding, unbelief and doubt, he rejects God's Word and is unable to be saved.

The second type of soil is described as stony, hard and rocky. Because the seed of the Word has no depth of soil giving it a firm root to take hold, the sun (circumstances of life) causes it to wither and die. This is a picture of a person who receives the Word excitedly and with joy. As he continues along in life, he learns he must die to his flesh (forgive, not let the sun go down on his anger, etc). Because the Word of God persecutes him in his desire to hang on to his life and live fleshly, it causes him to be unproductive and fall away.

Luke 9:23-24 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it"

I Corinthians 15:36 says "You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies."

I Pet 4:1 "In latter times men will fall away from the faith giving heed to doctrines of demons and seducing spirits."

The third type of soil is described as thorny. When the seed of the Word of God falls onto the soil of this person's heart, the weeds and thorns choke out the Word so that it becomes unproductive. Because he allows the worries, cares, riches and the desire for other things to choke out the Word, he is unfruitful. This person is more interested in the natural and temporal things of this world than he is in God's eternal kingdom.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt 6:21)

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt 6:24)

"So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:21)

The fourth type of person has good soil. His soil has been ploughed up and properly prepared to receive the seed of the Word. He hears and receives with understanding and produces fruit thirty, sixty and hundredfold. This is a person who has been brought to the place of brokenness and to true salvation. His heart being softened by life's circumstances and in the crucifixion of his flesh to obey the Word of God produces the fruit necessary for salvation, healing and deliverance. Each and every person in the world fits into one of these four categories.

John 12:24 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Matt 7:17-19)

All of us have hardened hearts in varying degrees depending on how we have responded to life's circumstances and on how much hardness of heart we have inherited from our forefathers.

Due to the failure of parents to bring children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, we have not been taught how to correctly respond to life and to God.

In every circumstance of life, we will do one of two things: we will either have the sorrow that leads to repentance (take our sin, pain and hurt to the Lord in prayer, forgiving those who have hurt us and receiving forgiveness) or we will have the sorrow that leads to death (turn to a false god/gods, harden our heart and get bitter). Each time, we align ourselves with the Word of God in our trials, we are conformed more to the image of Christ. Thus being strengthened, confirmed, established and perfected, leading to life and peace.

The word "hard" according to the dictionary means to be cold, unfeeling, insensitive or unyielding. To have a hardened heart means to live without the illumination of God; it means to be petrified like stone; to be covered with a callous fig. Blindness; to be made dull and it means to lose the power of understanding. According to the Word of God, you determine the condition of your heart. In Proverbs 4:23 it says,

"Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."

In Matthew 13:15, it tells us the consequences of idolatry and a hardened heart. It says

"For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their hearts and return, and I should heal them."

God is saying because of idolatry (other things are more important than Me), "I do not want them to see, hear, understand and be healed."

Even though Jesus rebuked the disciples for their unbelief and hardness of heart (Mark 8:17 and in Mark 16:14), in this parable of the sower, Jesus is saying only disciples can see, hear, understand and be healed. It is only disciples who can understand the mysteries (secrets) of the kingdom. Those who are not disciples get everything in parables (mysteries). Jesus said,

"You will know that you are my disciples when you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

"By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (John 15:8);

"If you abide in my Word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

"The Lord God has given me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened my ear; And I was not disobedient, nor did I turn back" (Isaiah 50:4).

In Mark 4:13, Jesus reveals a startling fact,

And He said to them (to the disciples), "Do you not understand this parable? And how will you understand all the parables?"

In other words, if you can understand this parable of the sower, you can understand all the parables (mysteries) in the Word of God. God is serious about how serious you are about Him and His Word.

John 2:23-24 "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men."

Your heart is vitally important. Your heart has much to do with how God moves in your life. A person may want to receive healing and deliverance but hardness of heart blocks him from the Truth which sets him free. In Hosea 4:6 it says,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

"Harlotry (idolatry), wine, and new wine take away the understanding." (Hosea 4:11)

"...so the people without understanding are ruined." (Hosea 4:14)

Hardness of heart blocks the understanding, which keeps us from having the knowledge that keeps us from perishing. God tells us in Proverbs 9:6,

"Forsake your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding (the opposite of folly)."

Your heart is like a sieve or a filter. It can either keep God bottled up or it can open up and allow the power of God to flow.

Job 38:30 "Water (the Word) becomes hard like stone, And the surface of the deep is imprisoned."

Some symptoms of a hardened heart:

1. If you are able to relate to the natural realm more than the spiritual realm.
2. If you are more moved and impacted by what the doctor has to say than what God has to say.
3. If you are more interested in excelling in natural and temporal things than in spiritual and eternal things.
4. If you have difficulty understanding the Word of God.
5. If you are able to remember natural and temporal things more than the things of God.
6. If the Word of God is not open to you or does not speak to you.
7. If you feel you get very little from God.
8. If you don't understand why everyone gets so excited about God and spiritual truths.
9. If you are getting little deliverance or healing.
10. If there is not much happening in your life regarding God.
11. If you have a hard time hearing God.
12. If you are cold to the things of God, unfeeling, insensitive or unyielding to God.
13. If you are more tuned into the world, movies, the Internet and TV than to God.
14. If you are unable to perceive spiritual truths.
15. If you are dull, stupid and retarded spiritually.
16. If you can quote Bible facts but are not able to understand them.
17. If you are more worldly minded than heavenly minded.
18. If you are not changing from glory to glory.

According to the Word of God, you determine the condition of your heart. You can change the condition of your heart. It is your choice. In Hosea 10:12 it says

"Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground (ground that has laid up and become hard), for it is time to seek the Lord until He comes to rain righteousness on you."

To break up the fallow ground means to plough up; literally to make a field to shine . You are God's field (garden). It means to prepare the soil of your spiritual garden to receive the good seed of God's Word so you can be spiritually fruitful.

1 Cor. 3:8-9 "Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" and in Matthew 5:14, He told the disciples,

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

A hardened heart is the peck-measure that keeps your light from shining out to the world blocking out the glory of God. We make our field shine through suffering in the flesh to align ourselves with the Word of God and through prayer and fasting. We break up the fallow ground of our hearts through choosing to shift spiritual gears from a focus on the natural and temporal things of this world to focusing on the spiritual and eternal. Our hearts are softened by our obedience and through saturating ourselves with the Word of God resulting in salvation, healing and deliverance. This requires determination and a change in our lifestyle.

MAT 13:43 "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called today, lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin

(HEB 3:13). "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts (Hebrews 3:15)"

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