

THE HARDENED HEART

May 25, 2020

JEREMIAH 18:12 NKJV - (12) And they said, "That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart."

To better understand the causes and solutions for a hardened heart, it's important to understand the broad biblical meaning of the word "heart." The Bible considers the heart to be the hub of human personality, producing the things we would ordinarily ascribe to the "mind." For example, Scripture informs us that grief; desires; joy; understanding; thoughts and reasoning; and, most importantly, faith and belief are all products of the heart. Also, Jesus tells us that the heart is a repository for good and evil and that what comes out of our mouth – good or bad – begins in the heart. Considering this, it's easy to see how a hardened heart can dull a person's ability to perceive and understand. Anyone's heart can harden, even faithful Christians'.

Sin causes hearts to grow hard, especially continual and unrepentant sin. Now we know that "if we confess our sins, Jesus is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins" (**1 John 1:9**). However, if we don't confess our sins, they have a increasing and numbing effect on the conscience, making it difficult to even distinguish right from wrong. And this sinful and hardened heart is equivalent to the "seared conscience"

Pride will also cause our hearts to harden. The "pride of your heart has deceived you . . . you who say to yourself, 'who can bring me down to the ground' . . . I will bring you down declares the LORD" (**Obadiah 3**). Also, the root of Pharaoh's hard-heartedness was his pride and arrogance. Even in the face of tremendous proofs and witnessing God's powerful hand at work, Pharaoh's hardened heart caused him to deny the sovereignty of the one, true God. And when King Nebuchadnezzar's "heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory . . . until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone He wishes" (**Daniel 5:20–21**). Accordingly, when we're inclined to do it our way, thinking we can "go it on our own," it would be wise to recall what King Solomon taught us in **Proverbs 14:12** and **16:25**: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

So, what then is the remedy for a heart condition such as this? First and foremost, we have to recognize the effect that this spiritual disease has on us. And God will help us to see our heart's condition when we ask Him: "Search me O God, and know my heart...see if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (**Psalms 139:23–24**). God can heal any heart once we recognize our disobedience and repent of our sins. But true repentance is more than simply a resolute feeling of steadfast determination. Repentance reveals itself in a changed life.

After repenting of our sins, hard hearts begin to be cured when we study God's Word. Hearts can also become hardened when we suffer setbacks and disappointments in life. No one is immune to trials here on earth. Yet, just as steel is forged by a blacksmith's hammer, so, too, can our faith be strengthened by the trials we encounter in the valleys of life. Remember, God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us" (**Romans 5:3–5**).

SCRIPTURE READING: ROMANS 2:5

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: God provides spiritual cures, not human band aids.

"A JOURNEY OF THE HEART"