

WATCH OUT FOR A HARD HEART!

JAMIE MCNAB

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We have recently been reviewing the Exodus story.

There's part of the narrative that troubles some people.

Exodus 14:1-4

1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

2 "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.

3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.'

4 **Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD." And they did so.

God says He will harden Pharaoh's heart?

Many times in the story of the Ten Plagues we read how God would harden Pharaoh's heart.

Exodus 9:8-9

8 So the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "**Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace, and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh.**

9 And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt, and **it will cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.**"

BOILS!

Exodus 9:11-12

11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians.

12 But **the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh**; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart!

Many are troubled. God is unfair. How can He condemn Pharaoh if Pharaoh is unable to “repent” or humble himself? How can Pharaoh be blamed if an all-powerful God interferes with his mind and hardens it? Isn't God responsible for Pharaoh's disobedience?

It seems puzzling? There is an answer ... which we'll get to later (probably in a couple of weeks!!)

But first ... **I'd like to look more closely at what it means to have a “hard heart” — in a Biblical sense.** It could affect any of us!

We may think of a “hard heart” as someone who is cruel — slightly vindictive — uncaring. But that's not the Biblical version!

A Bible hard-heart is one which is insensitive ... unfeeling ... unyielding. Resists God — Resists The Truth!

It is quite common in the world. But should have no place among believers.

A heart which is hard to impress ... to teach ... resists the Truth... to influence — **a heart which is set in its ways.** Not easy to entreat.

Scripture has much to say. Including **a warning for believers.**

Mark 6:37-44

37 But He answered and said to them, “You give them something to eat.”

And they said to Him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?”

38 But He said to them, “**How many loaves do you have?**” Go and see.” And when they found out they said, “**Five, and two fish.**”

39 Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. (*“Green” = Greek: Chloros — the same word as the horse in the Apocalypse*)

40 So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties.

41 **And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all.**

42 So they all ate and were filled.

43 **And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish.**

44 Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men. (*Besides women and children — maybe about 10,000?*)

An amazing miracle!

Mark 6:45-52

45 Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away.

46 And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. (*If Jesus needs to pray — so do you and I*)

47 Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land.

48 Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. **Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.**

49 And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out;

50 for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”

51 **Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled.**

52 **For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.**

“Their heart was hardened”. This is Jesus’ disciples.

“Hardened” from the Greek: Poroo — from Poros.

A kind of stone. The picture is of the effect of rubbing skin on stone or a hard object — develops a CALLOUS ... a HARDENING.

Mark 6:52 (AMP)

52 ... **their hearts had grown callous**

The impression is of a heart which is not sensitive.

Even the disciples were very slow to perceive — slow to understand. It should have been obvious that Jesus was a miracle-worker.

Don't confuse hard-hearted as just implying someone who is cruel or uncaring. They didn't pick up on spiritual truth.

And ... **if the disciples could be hard-hearted — what about us?**

Don't confuse hard-hearted as just implying someone who is cruel or uncaring.

Mark 8:13-17

13 And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.

14 **Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat.**

15 Then He charged them, saying, **“Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”**

16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, **“It is because we have no bread.”**

17 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, **“Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened?”**

Mark 8:18-21

18 **Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?** And do you not remember?

19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?"

They said to Him, "Twelve."

20 "Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?"

And they said, "Seven."

21 So He said to them, "How is it you do not understand?"

Jesus outlines the components of a hard-heart. It just doesn't "see" spiritual truths.

Again ... **if it affects the disciples — what about us?**

If we're too close to the world ... its values ... standards ... ways ... expectations — we may be too "dense" to pick up spiritual matters? **Do we detect the STILL SMALL VOICE OF GOD?** Where do we spend our time?

A hard-heart can bring trouble.

Proverbs 28:14

14 Happy is the man who is always reverent, (a man who fears the Lord)

But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

Proverbs 29:1

1 He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, (stubborn) Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

If God is dealing with us ... don't harden your hearts? HEED!

We should be quick to learn. Attentive students!

Hebrews 3:7-11

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

"Today, if you will hear His voice,

8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,

In the day of trial in the wilderness,
9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,
And saw My works forty years.
10 **Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, 'They always go astray in their heart,
And they have not known My ways.'**
11 So I swore in My wrath,
'They shall not enter My rest.' ” (*enter the Promised Land — the
Kingdom of God on the earth at that time*)

The HOLY SPIRIT SAYS: “Do not harden your hearts”.

(quoting from Psalms 95 — noting that David was led by the Holy Spirit)

Note: SAYS ... NOT SAID. FOR US!

Hebrews 3:12

12 **Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of
unbelief in departing from the living God;** (*BEWARE BRETHREN.
Addressed to US — believers . Evil heart — HARDENED HEART!*).

Hebrews 3:13

13 **but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of
you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**

Exhort each other — encourage each other — lest ... you be hardened
through sin.

Hebrews 3:14-1

14 For we have become partakers of Christ **if** we hold the beginning of
our confidence steadfast to the end,

15 while it is said:

**“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”**

16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out
of Egypt, led by Moses?

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

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? (*those who did not obey — KJV — “to them that believed not”*)

19 **So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.**

They failed to enter the Promised Land — and we may not enter the Kingdom.

“Hardened” in Greek: “Skleruno”. (We see it in atherosclerosis ... hardening of arteries).

Similar to Poroo. A tough ... insensitive heart.

Hebrews 4:4-7

4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way:

“And **God rested on the seventh day from all His works**”;

5 and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”

6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,

7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said:

**“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts.”**

Today — if you will hear His voice — don’t harden your hearts.

Hebrews 4:8-9

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. (Rest = Sabbatismos = the Sabbath day)**

Verse 9: LAMSA: It is therefore the duty of the people of God to keep the Sabbath

If you will hear. **IF**. Listen ... be attentive. And respond.

If we were to hear ... and hear ... and hear ... and just ignore — that is evidence of a hard-heart.

Unfortunately ... there are plenty of examples around us of hard-hearts. Watch that they don't influence us.

Mark 3:1-5

1 And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand.

2 **So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.**

3 And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward."

4 Then He said to them, "**Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?**" But they kept silent.

5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, **being grieved by the hardness of their hearts**, He said to the man, "**Stretch out your hand.**" And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

The religious people had hard-hearts. That angered and grieved Jesus!

How could they learn ... come to the Truth ... be reconciled to the Father? Their hard-heart prevented it.

Romans 2:1-6

1 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. (*Hypocrisy*)

2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

3 And **do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?**

4 Or **do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**

5 **But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart** you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,
6 who **“will render to each one according to his deeds”**:

Romans 2:5 (ESV)

5 **But because of your hard and impenitent heart** you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

These verses are addressed to those who claimed to know the Truth.

“Hardness” = Sklerotes

These were religious hypocrites. Rather than being soft-hearted ... humble ... teachable ... thankful — they're harsh judges of others.

It seems that Paul believes there are such in the Church?

Ephesians 4:17-19

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that **you (church goes ... believers) should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,**

18 **having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness (hardness) of their heart;**

19 **who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.**

Many in the world have hard-hearts — even past feeling.

Greek: Porosis. Hardening of the heart. Unfortunately — this is mistranslated in the KJV (and “new” NJKV) as “blindness”. The NASB and ESV — “Hardness”. Apostolic Polyglot — “Callousness”.

One of the problems of being too close to the world is that you will often be influenced by their hardening.

They just can't grasp or understand Godly things. They have no perception. Their hearts too often are calloused — past feeling. Not good examples.

So — exercise caution. “Bad company corrupts good manners”.

We should be quick to believe God — and His Word. We should recognise the voice of our Shepherd.

Mark 16:9-14

9 **Now when He rose, early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene**, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

10 **She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.**

11 **And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.**

12 **After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.**

13 **And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.**

14 **Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.**

Jesus rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart.

It wasn't that they were cruel or uncaring/unfeeling of others. It's because **they were too slow to believe — too slow to accept the Power of God.**

There is a tendency to walk by sight — only — and not by faith.

We don't want to have hardness of heart! There are some things we can do.

Psalms 119:9-11

9 **How can a young man cleanse his way? (Live right)**

By taking heed according to Your word.

10 **With my whole heart I have sought You;**

Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! (*Keep me on track*)

11 **Your word I have hidden in my heart,**

That I might not sin against You.

We should hide God's Word in our hearts — maybe even memorise it.

Proverbs 4:20-23

20 **My son, give attention to my words;
Incline your ear to my sayings.**

21 **Do not let them depart from your eyes;**

Keep them in the midst of your heart;

22 **For they are life to those who find them,**

And health to all their flesh.

23 **Keep your heart with all diligence,**

For out of it spring the issues of life.

“Keep your heart with all diligence”. “Guard” or “watch over” — your hearts.

It is our responsibility. Watch what goes into our heart — what we dwell on —think about.

There is a great deal of hardness of heart — in the world and even among the people of God.

We should be tender-hearted. Quick to hear. Quick to learn. Quick to believe.

“Today —if you will hear His voice — do not harden your heart!”

TO BE CONTINUED!

