

MATTERS OF THE HEART

Hardness of Heart

Mark 6:25-52; Mark 8:1-21; Hebrews 3:7-13

Hardness of heart describes a calloused heart that is unyielding or cold in spirit. A state in which one loses sensitivity.

HARDNESS OF HEART CAN CHANGE YOU

1. By keeping you from hearing the voice of the Lord and being led by Him.
2. By causing you to relate more easily to the natural realm than to the supernatural (spiritual) realm.
3. By deadening your memory to the good and miraculous things that God has done for you in the past.
4. By keeping you from perceiving or understanding the truth of God's word in a way that will benefit or change you.

BUT YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR HEART

1. The good news is that hardness of heart is reversible.
2. What your heart is sensitive to you will remember; what your heart is hardened to you will forget.

AND YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

1. Change your thoughts and you will change your life.
2. Focus your attention and you will determine what dominates you.
3. Focus on God, what God is doing, and God's way of doing things, and God will help you change your life.

2. Read Genesis 3:1-13. Satan did not have the power to “make” Eve sin. But he did have the power to “tempt” Eve to sin. He did so by talking to her. Eve heard something and thought about it. How do what we listen to and what we think about affect what we do?

3. Read Romans 4:18-22. Look at what Abraham considered in this passage. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. Abraham believed God, so his faith was credited to him as righteousness (right standing with God). What we consider has a direct impact on our faith and is important in our lives. Why is this?

4. We all do the things that we consider important or vital. For many Christians, being separate from the world is not really considered vital. Yet, every Christian wants a stronger walk with the Lord. So how do we get there?

5. In Hebrews 3:7-8 (NIV), “..the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...’” How does a person harden their heart or turn a deaf ear to God?

6. Hebrews 3:13 (NIV) says, “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” Why do Christians need daily encouragement?

Why do you think emphasis is put on “Today” rather than, “If you get around to it” or “When it fits your schedule”? Again why encourage other Christians “Today”?

LIFE AT HOME

In Hebrews 3:13, the word translated “exhort” (KJV), or encourage (NIV), is from the Greek (parakaleo) the word used by Jesus to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14:16. The root meaning of the word has to do with coming alongside to give help. According to *The New Testament Study Bible*, “It’s meaning can be illustrated in picturing someone running alongside a long-distance runner and exhorting him to finish the course in the face of his fatigue and exhaustion.”

Can you picture this? A runner closing in on the finish line but so fatigued, so exhausted, that they are ready to forget the entire race they have run and end it all right here, right now. Then someone comes running alongside them, encouraging them and renewing their strength, enabling them to complete the race.

Hebrews says this is you! This is us! We are running a race in the face of discouraging messages and uncomfortable feelings while losing strength. We need the encouragement of someone beside us—NOW, TODAY! Cheering us on. Telling us to hang in there; to not give up; to not quit; to finish the race! As we receive new strength, we in turn pass it on to those around us. We continue the race and encourage others to do the same. We persist, and we pass it on. The victory is in sight. So let’s press on, press through, and finish this race together!