



The Book of Hebrews 3:7-11_Harden Not your Hearts Pt 2
10 Ways to Achieve and Maintain a Soft Heart before God

April 7, 2024

Holy Text: Hebrews 3:7-11

Review:

We said last week that based upon the truths the author, through the Holy Ghost, has given so far, in this Text he lays out a chilling, and very applicable exhortation (and warning) not only to his immediate hearers, but through them, to us as well.

He knew many of his hearers were struggling with their newfound profession of faith due to familial, cultural, and spiritual pressures.

He also knew they were in danger of replicating the disasters of the Old Testament: being abundantly taught and cared for by God, but refusing to obey Him. Hence his holy warnings:

1. Listen! Hear!
2. Listen right now...Today!
3. Tomorrow is not promised!
4. Don't have a hard heart!
5. Don't be wilderness-hearer! Don't grieve the LORD!
6. Hear His voice! Know His ways...
7. So you can enter into His rest!

Today, by God's grace, I'd like to focus in again on **hard-heartedness**. Why?

1. Remember, Hebrews primary audience is to professing Jewish believers. This exhortation to believers implies that believers have the capacity to stiffen their necks!
2. God commands us NOT to have hard, but soft and tender hearts towards His Word.
3. Hard-heartedness, in its various forms (pridefulness, loss of God's fear, arrogance, putting man's word above God's Word, just plain rebellion, etc.) is almost always a spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and financially devastating state in which to find oneself. It brings pain!
4. Such pain isn't just an Old Testament reality. Remember one of the consequences of prolonged hard-heartedness from Romans 1?

Romans 1:18-32 (KJV) *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; **19** Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. **20** For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

21 *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. **22** Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, **23** And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. **24** Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies*

between themselves: **25** Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: **27** And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. **28** And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; **29** Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, **30** Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, **31** Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: **32** Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Why this is important:

- 1. A soft heart towards God and His Word reflects a truly transformed spirit/soul.**
- 2. A soft heart produces joyful obedience and brings about God's favor.**
- 3. A soft-hearted believer enjoys better fellowship with God.**
- 4. A soft-hearted household continually reforms according to Scripture and enjoys sweeter days.**
- 5. A soft-hearted church increasingly worships as the LORD prescribes, and enjoys a corporate blessing.**

What is a Hard Heart?

A hard heart is a heart that will not hear and obey. It is not necessarily a confused heart. It understands, but is more committed to its own will than God's. In short, it is a person to whom God has spoken and likely has greatly blessed, but who still will not submit to Him.

What causes a Hard Heart?

Idolatry. Placing anything above God, especially for a long period of time. For example:

1. Love for sin

John 3:16-21 (KJV) *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. **17** For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. **18** He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. **19** And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. **20** For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. **21** But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

2. The fear of man

Matthew 13:20-21 (KJV) *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; **21** Yet hath he not root in himself,*

but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

3. Comfort and ease

Matthew 19:20-23 (KJV) *The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? 21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. 23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

4. Your feelings

Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV) *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

Luke 6:45 (KJV) *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*

5. Carnal Ideas or ideologies

Colossians 2:8 (KJV) *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

6. Pain and Trials

Job 2:9 (KJV) *Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.*

The Sad Reality of Hard Heartedness

Blessings, by themselves, do not produce a soft heart. We must desire the Blessor!

Nehemiah 9:7-17 (KJV) *Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; 8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous: 9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; 10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. 11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. 12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. 13 Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: 14 And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: 15 And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. 16 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy*

commandments, 17 And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

10 Ways to Achieve and Maintain a Soft Heart before God

1. Repenting, Believing, and....Repenting!

- A soft heart begins with salvation. When Christ becomes our Savior, our old heart of stone is replaced with new heart of flesh.

***Ezekiel 36:26-27 (KJV)** A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

- But Christians must continue to repent...not for our *salvation*, but for our *sanctification*. This act of approaching God in repentance keeps pride at bay and our hearts open before God.

***Revelation 2:5 (KJV)** Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

2. Loving God and Hating Sin

- A soft heart beats for the Savior. It loves Him and expresses that love the way He prescribes.

***Matthew 22:36-38 (KJV)** Master, which is the great commandment in the law? **37** Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* **38** This is the first and great commandment.*

***John 14:21 (KJV)** He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

- Consistent sinning strengthens the hard heart! A Christian must learn to hate sin!

***Psalms 97:10 (KJV)** Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.*

***Proverbs 8:13 (KJV)** The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.*

***Romans 12:9 (KJV)** Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

3. Imitating the Humility of Jesus

- Christians are commanded to imitate Christ.

***1 Peter 2:21 (KJV)** For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

1 John 2:6 (KJV) *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

- May we emulate the Savior's soft-heart towards His Father...His humility.

"The Son can do nothing of Himself" (John 5: 19)

"I can of My own self do nothing; My judgment is just, because I seek not My own will" (John 5:30)

"I receive not glory from men" (John 5:41)

"I am come not to do My own will" (John 6:38)

"My teaching is not Mine" (John 7:16)

"I am not come of Myself" (John 7:28)

"I do nothing of Myself" (John 8:28)

"I have not come of Myself, but He sent Me" (John 8: 42)

"I seek not My own glory" (John 8:50)

"The words that I say, I speak not from Myself" (John 14:10)

"The word which you hear is not Mine" (John 14: 24)¹

4. Reading/Studying the Word Daily, with a Commitment to Obey

- Studying God's Word with the right attitude cultivates a soft heart.

Psalms 119:9-11 (KJV) *BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. 10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. 11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

Hebrews 4:12 (KJV) *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

James 1:21-22 (KJV) *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

5. Commitment to a Local Church

- *The Ordinary Means of Grace* (the God-ordained, normative instruments by which He encourages, strengthens, and discipled His people), administered weekly by a local assembly, nurtures a soft heart.

1. Prayer (corporate, from which we draw mutual strength)
2. Praise (which focuses our hearts together on the beauty of our LORD)
3. Preaching (which builds our faith and stirs us to action)
4. The LORD's Table (which reminds us of the Gospel)
5. Baptism (which encourages us as we see Christ's saving work)
6. Fellowship (which encourages and refreshes our souls)
7. Discipline (which we need to grow and defeat sin)

¹ *Humility* by Andrew Murray, 1895.

- Want a cold heart? Stop going to church!

Hebrews 10:25 (KJV) *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

6. Maintaining a Teachable Spirit

- A soft-heart grows in tenderness through *submission*.

Hebrews 13:17 (KJV) *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

1 Peter 5:5 (KJV) *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

- It learns to tremble when God speaks.

Isaiah 66:1-2 (KJV) *Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? **2** For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

7. Having Times of Devotions/Personal Worship

- A soft heart grows as it spends time with the Savior. Those times of seeking, communing, wrestling, bowing, meditating, and groaning are vital to resisting fleshly impulses.

Psalms 4:4 (KJV) *Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.*

Psalms 63:6 (KJV) *When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.*

Luke 6:12 (KJV) *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*

Matthew 6:6 (KJV) *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

8. Being aware of Bitterness

- A soft heart withers in the blistering heat of bitterness.
- Bitterness is from a Greek word implying “acridity, or a very strong sour taste or smell.”
- Bitterness is the consequence of extreme grudge holding or anger over an offense.
- Bitterness sours one’s heart and soul. It is a strong foundation for a rock-hard heart.

Ephesians 4:31 (KJV) *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

Hebrews 12:15 (KJV) *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

9. Walking in Forgiveness

- A soft heart understands the weight of its sin in the light of God's merciful forgiveness. So it too forgives. A hard heart refuses to do so.

Matthew 6:14-15 (KJV) *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Ephesians 4:32 (KJV) *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

10. Serving Others

- Often, proof of a softened heart is the ability to genuinely love and serve others...having compassion in other words. Wonderfully, doing so intentionally can aid the softening.

Galatians 5:13-14 (KJV) *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Galatians 6:1-2 (KJV) *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

James 2:14-17 (KJV) *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

Final thoughts:

Much contemporary chaos is due to hearts hard not only to the Gospel, but also to the rest of the Word of God. Such are hearts hardened to the biblical Christ and His holy commands.

May that never be our testimony! Rather, may we keep soft hearts before the God who saved us, and washed all our sins away by His own blood.

And may the blessings of the LORD fall upon us as we obey, for glory of God and the upbuilding of His Kingdom.

Amen.