

Harden Not Your Hearts

(Go To Meeting)

Byron Norrod—April 9, 2021

Welcome, everybody! Happy Sabbath! It's nice to have a Sabbath Day!

We just came through the spring Holy Days, and how meaningful they were. We had the Passover, the Night to Be Much Observed, and then the first and last day of Unleavened Bread. We learned a lot of lessons:

- leavening and sin
- putting sin out of our lives
- trying to get clean and better
- being right with God

If you read the Exodus portion when the first Passover occurred, you might have read some things about Pharaoh and *how he hardened his heart!*

Pharaoh was the king of the greatest superpower in the world at that time. Pharaoh represented Satan who is 'the god of this world' and, in fact, Pharaoh thought that he was a god.

We also learned that we are to come out of sin, and Egypt is a type of sin. Not only does Egypt symbolize sin in the Old Testament with the ancient Israelites, but it also symbolized spiritual bondage and slavery.

We have come through the spring Holy Days and have these lessons and now we're buoyed up having been cleansed of all of our sins, and now we're forgiven and we 're-upped' our commitment to God. Now we have a new lease on our spiritual lives! *We are beginning again!*

But there are a lot of good lessons that we can still draw from Pharaoh and from coming out of sin, coming out of Egypt.

What I would like to do is to explore not hardening our heart and how we can avoid hardening our heart. I'm going to give you some references for when Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

I. Pharaoh's Bad Example of Hardening His Heart

God said that He knew the heart of Pharaoh and would not let the Israelites go, but that later after God's wonders he would let them go.

Exodus 3:19: "And I am **sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go**, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with all My wonders, which I will do in the midst of it. And **after that he will let you go**" (vs 19-20).

Then God says that *He [God] would harden Pharaoh's heart!*

Exodus 4:21: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'When you go to return into Egypt, see that you do all those wonders, which I have put in your hand before Pharaoh; but **I will harden his heart**, that he shall not let the people go.

Exodus 7:3: "And **I will harden Pharaoh's heart** and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt."

God says that our hearts are evil continuously, and God searches the hearts and the reins.

Jeremiah 20:12: "But, O LORD of hosts, **who tries the righteous and sees the reins and the heart...**"

Why would God harden Pharaoh's heart? God said He would! Pharaoh's heart was either hardened by himself, or God did it.

The initial encounter was in Exodus 7:13: "And **He hardened Pharaoh's heart...**"

Then the first plague with the blood and Pharaoh's heart became hard. Here's something interesting. There are times when it says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Then there are times when it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Then there are times at are a little ambiguous where it just says that 'Pharaoh's heart was hard, or hardened.'

This first one with the plague of the blood, Pharaoh's heart became hard. Later that we will see that there's a hint, and we might be able to discern what it means when it says that 'Pharaoh's heart became hard.'

In the third instance, second plague, with the frogs, Exodus 8:15: "But Pharaoh saw that there was relief, and **he hardened his heart...**"

Verse 19—with the gnats: "...And **Pharaoh's heart was hardened...**"

With the flies, v 32: "And **Pharaoh hardened his heart** at this time also..."

When the livestock died, Exodus 9:7: "...And **the heart of Pharaoh was hardened...**"

With the boils, v 12: "And **the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh...**"

This sixth plague was the first time that God actually hardened the heart of Pharaoh during the plagues. He initially hardened Pharaoh's heart, but then it wasn't until the sixth time that God hardened his heart overtly.

During the hail, v 34: "And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders had ceased, **he sinned still more and hardened his heart, he and his servants.**"

During the locust, Exodus 10:1: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh, for **I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants...**'"

Verse 20: "But **the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart...**"

During the darkness, v 27: "But **the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart...**"

When the firstborn died, Exodus 11:10: "...And **the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart...**"

Then when Pharaoh chased Israel into the wilderness, Exodus 14:8: "And **the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh**, king of Egypt. And he pursued the children of Israel, and the children of Israel went out with a high hand."

So, we see 12 instances where either God hardened Pharaoh's heart, or Pharaoh hardened his own heart. And sometimes, Pharaoh's heart was hard.

It might be sounding a little bit complex, but let me make it a little clearer:

- during plagues 2, 4 & 7 Pharaoh hardened his own heart
- during plagues 6, 8, 9, 10 & 11 (and the first time with the snakes) God hardened his heart

With those ambiguous ones we might get a hint:

Exodus 9:34: "And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders had ceased, **he sinned still more and hardened his heart**, he and his servants. And **the heart of Pharaoh was hardened**, neither would he let the children of Israel go, even as the LORD had spoken by Moses" (vs 34-35).

"And **the heart of Pharaoh was hardened...**" is the ambiguous term that is used during some of the plagues and we're not sure. But because it says in v 34 that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Then it says that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. It might be okay for us to assume that we can understand—it doesn't say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart—that Pharaoh was hardening his own heart during those times.

If we can assume that during plagues 1-5 & 7 Pharaoh hardened his own heart. During the initial time, God hardened his heart before any of the plagues, and 6-10 and then 11th time going into the wilderness.

- Why all this back and forth?
- Is this really helpful?
- Is there any benefit to this?

There might be! We have to understand why Pharaoh would harden his own heart. In what circumstance and in what circumstance would God harden Pharaoh's heart.

I don't want God to harden my heart! I want to have a soft, malleable heart toward God. I don't want Him to blindside me, like some of the coy 'gods' in Greece and Rome. Remember the Grecian and Roman gods? *They were very fickle and arbitrary.*

We don't need that! God is not like that! God has a set plan. I would like to understand when and why God would do this. Was God responsible for Pharaoh's evil? That's a fair question! I'll just tell you that it has three answers, and all of them are *no!*

1. God knew how evil Pharaoh's heart was, and how selfish he was

Pharaoh had a good thing going! He has slaves that would empower him, make him richer and build all of his monuments. He'd be foolish to turn his back on that!

So, God used Pharaoh's evil motives to effect His will, which was to bless who He would bless and then to bring ancient out from Egypt, out from bondage 430 years later on the self-same day that they entered into Egypt. God's Holy purpose would not be contravened by man!

2. God had a reason for hardening Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh thought that he was 'God' in the flesh. He wanted to be 'God.' He claimed himself to be 'God.'

He was Pharaoh, the king of all the world!

Who else is 'king of th world'—currently? *Satan!* It's interesting that nowhere in this passage that I could find is Satan directly attributed with hardening Pharaoh's heart, or having much to do with this.

However, when we recognize that Pharaoh, the god of this world *in the physical sense*—just like Satan is 'the god of this world' in the spiritual sense—he had to recognize that there was *a Being* that was far greater and superior to himself.

Pharaoh had to be humbled and to realize that there was a God Being and that he could not dictate to God how he would worship or come to God. When God hardened Pharaoh's heart, He was saying,

Look, Pharaoh, you want to be hard, you want to be tough, okay, I'll make you tough as nails. I'll make you really tough, and I'll still win!

As tough as we want to be, we're not so tough to out tough God!

3. Was God responsible for Pharaoh's evil?

Romans 9:15: "For He said to Moses, 'I will show mercy to whomever I show mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion.'"

Remember the passage where it says, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts; My ways are not your ways; My ways are far higher than yours; My thoughts are far higher than yours.' In another place where the pottery can't tell God, 'Hey, what are You doing with me?'

Verse 16: "So then, *it is* not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs; rather, *it is* of God, Who shows mercy. For the Scripture said to Pharaoh, '**For this very purpose I raised you up in order that I might show in you My power, so that My name may be declared in all the earth.**'" (vs 16-17).

God was going to show His wonders and He would be seen as the most powerful God, not the man-god that Pharaoh thought that he was.

Verse 18: "So then, **He shows mercy to whom He will, and He hardens whom He will.**"

It's up to God who He's going to harden and to whom He is going to show mercy to! By the way, He's shown us a lot of mercy by giving us a calling! I mean, what an amazing merciful God to give us a calling and an election, and imbue us with part of His Holy Spirit so that we can come to Him with soft, malleable and loving hearts. ***It's His will!***

Verse 19: "Will you then reply to me, 'Why does He yet find fault? For who has opposed His purpose?'" *It's like saying:*

Why do you find fault with me, God? You created me like this, why are You mad at me? If You make me hard, why are you mad at me?

"...For who has opposed His purpose?"

I can't do anything if You're going to make me a hard guy! What can I do?

Verse 20: "Yes, indeed, O man, who are you

to answer against God? Shall the thing that is formed say to the one who formed *it*, 'Why did you make me this way?'"

Paul is saying that if we think we know what we're doing, and God doesn't know what He's doing, and we know better than God, are we not making ourselves man-gods, just like Pharaoh was?

Then we're going to start making our heart hard! God is then going to harden our heart and say, 'You're not the one that I thought you were.'

Verse 31: "But Israel, although they followed after a law of righteousness... [not *the* Law of righteousness] ...did not attain to a Law of righteousness. Why? Because *they did* not seek it by faith, but by works of law..." (vs 31-32). *Paul is contrasting faith vs works of law!*

"...or they stumbled at the Stone of Stumbling, exactly as it is written: 'Behold, I place in Sion a Stone of Stumbling and a Rock of offense, but everyone who believes in Him shall not be ashamed'" (vs 32-33).

If God is showing mercy on whom He will, and hardens whom He will, could we not say to Paul:

Look, wait! I'm not questioning God, I just need to understand. When is God going to harden my heart? Is He going to make me all tough and mean at Him for no reason? Is He that arbitrary?

Verse 22: "And *who dares to question His purpose* if God, willing to show *His* wrath and to make known His power, chose in much long-suffering to put up with **the vessels of wrath**, which were created for destruction; in order that He might make known the riches of His glory unto **the vessels of mercy, which He prepared before for glory**" (vs 22-23).

Remember that God told Jeremiah that He knew him while in his mother's womb. At the beginning of Ephesians about predestination where God knew us from the very beginning. It's not the point of this message to examine predestination.

However, what Christ is saying is, 'I have made a choice that I'm going to choose "...vessels of mercy..." and I'm going to give them a world that they can live in as "...vessels of wrath..."

We who are called out of the world "...vessels of wrath..." and become now "...vessels of mercy..." **Once God has shown us mercy, do you think He wants to undo that? Not at all!**

Verse 30: "What then shall we say? That *the* Gentiles, who did not follow after righteousness,

have attained righteousness, even *the* righteousness that *is* by faith.”

God does not arbitrarily harden people’s hearts for no reason or purpose. He’s given us a world of wrath in the “...vessels of wrath...” to live in. we have to be harmless as doves, yet, wise as serpents.

We have to be vessels of mercy with malleable hearts, softened hearts. But nor will God harden a person who is sincerely seeking the Truth. If a person has a heart of love and is seeking Truth, **God’s not going to say**, ‘I don’t want you anymore.’

But a man who has set his heart *against* God, God’s going to make him very tough. Even if you do harden your heart for some reason, God’s love is such is that His desire is for you to be in His Family. *Please get that into your softened, malleable hearts of flesh!*

Let your heart beat not with hardened stone, but with a softened heart of flesh that responds to God’s call. He will not needlessly harden your heart! It’s nowhere recorded in the Bible.

Pharaohs bad example was #1. He hardened his own heart, and there was a reason for God hardening his heart on top of it.

II. God Tells Us Not to Harden Our Own Hearts

God instructs us that we should not harden our hearts. Pharaoh’s example was bad, but:

- Does it help us?
- Are there any lessons here?
- Are there any other times of people hardening their heart?

There’s actually the time in Exo. 17 where God references it several times more in Proverbs, the Psalms, Hebrews and at the provocation or testing of the waters at Meribah where Israel provoked God, saying,

Is God with us or not. We don’t know. Yes, He’s worked with us for 40 years. Our shoes haven’t worn out, our clothes haven’t worn out. He brought us through the Red Sea. He’s given us water out of the Rock, fed us manna from heaven, and quail. God has intervened in our lives time and time again.

Yet, I don’t know if God is still working with me or not! God, are you there?

We sometimes might feel that way! I know that I have. Honestly, I’ve felt that way some times.

Hebrews 3:7: “For this reason, even as the

Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, **harden not your heart...**”

This is the title of this message and a direct injunction from God telling us to ***not to harden our heart!***

“...as in the rebellion, in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (v 8).

Psalm 95:8^[transcriber’s correction]: “Harden not your heart as in the rebellion, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.”

Referring to Exodus 17:2-7 Paul says, Hebrews 3:9: where your fathers tempted Me and tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Because of this, I was indignant with that generation, and said, “They are always going astray in their hearts, and they have not known My ways.” So, I swore in My wrath, “If they shall enter into My rest—”” (vs 9-11).

Verse 12: “Beware, brethren, lest perhaps there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in apostatizing from *the* living God. Rather, be encouraging one another each day, while it is called ‘today,’ **so that none of you become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.** For we are companions of Christ, **if** we truly hold the confidence *that we had* at the beginning steadfast until the end” (vs 12-14).

Verse 15: “As it is being said, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, **do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion.**”

- If God says it once, that’s enough!
- If He says it again, we better wake up!
- If He says it multiple times in the Bible, ***we really better wake up!***

Verse 16: “For some, after hearing, did rebel, but not all who came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was He indignant *for* forty years? *Was it* not with those who had sinned, whose dead bodies were strewn in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear *that they* would not enter into His rest, except to those who had disobeyed? So, **we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief**” (vs 16-19).

Hebrews 4:1: “Therefore, we should fear, lest perhaps, a promise being open to enter into His rest, any of you might seem to come short.”

I’m sure that Paul would not exclude himself. You or I “...might seem to come short.”

Verse 2: “For truly, we have had the Gospel preached *to us*, even as they also *did*; **but the preaching of the Word did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith in those who heard.**”

These are two of the biggest keys in God telling us not to harden our heart.

1. we have to hear the Word
 - we have to have it preached to us
 - we have to have the Word of God coming into us
2. then we have to build on that and build faith, Christ's faith

Those are the two main, essential elements in not hardening our heart.

Pharaoh had the Word preached to him, did he not? Did Moses not tell him, 'Hey, look! We want to go out and keep a Feast to our God? God is God, by the way, and He does all these signs and wonders.' Remember the Egyptians, who said,

We can't do that; we can't duplicate that miracle. That is the finger of God actually doing the miracles that we cannot duplicate.

Pharaoh was preached a witness. But he would not hear (Rom. 1). He could not hear, and he hardened his own heart time and again.

Verse 3: "For we who have believed, we ourselves are entering into the rest, as He has said, 'So, I swore in My wrath, "If they shall enter into My rest—"... [there's no way that's going to happen] ...although the works were finished from *the* foundation of *the* world. For He spoke in a certain place about the seventh *day* in this manner: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.' And again concerning this: 'If they shall enter into My rest—" (vs 3-5).

Verse 6: "Consequently, since it remains *for* some to enter into it, and those who had previously heard the Gospel did not enter in because of disobedience."

Remember, that's the contrary of believing and having faith.

Verse 7: "Again, He marks out a certain day, 'Today,' saying in David after so long a time (exactly as it has been quoted *above*), 'Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.'"

Hearing this again and again, and he's saying that it matters to Him. 'Hear the words that I'm preaching, do them, believe them,' and hearing with belief is an active belief! It requires works on our part.

I can say to my wife 'I love you,' but not do the things that show my love for her. Does she believe me or not? Hopefully, she believes me, because I do love her!

Verse 8: "For if Joshua had given them rest,

He would not have spoken *long* afterwards of another day. There remains, therefore, **Sabbath-keeping** for the people of God. For the one who has entered into His rest, he also has ceased from his works, just as God *did* from His own *works*. We should be diligent, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience" (vs 8-11).

What's interesting is that word for 'sabbath rest' is 'sabbatismos.' Verse 9: "There remains, therefore, **Sabbath-keeping** for the people of God." The people of God shall enter into His rest, which is Sabbath-keeping.

The Protestants don't get this at all! Those who have hardened hearts can't get this! They will not get it! They don't want to get it! They don't want to understand!

Hebrews 3:12: "Beware, brethren, lest perhaps there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in apostatizing from *the* living God. Rather, be encouraging one another each day, while it is called 'today,' **so that none of you become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.** For we are companions of Christ, if we truly hold the confidence... [the belief] ...*that we had* at the beginning steadfast until the end" (vs 12 14).

Isa. 57 tells us that if we will soften our heart He will allow us to enter into His rest.

Isaiah 57:1: "The righteous perish, and no one lays *it* to heart, and merciful men *are* taken away; none considering that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one who walked in his uprightness" (vs 1-2).

Psa. 95 tells us to soften our heart and harden not our heart, and if we do not harden our heart then He will allow us to enter into that rest.

Psalm 95:6: "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker, for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would but hearken to His voice" (vs 6-7).

God is giving us an opportunity! He's offering us a chance to come into His rest, which He denied to the ancient Israelites who rebelled against Him; who would not believe!

Nehemiah 9:24: "And the children went in and possessed the land, and You subdued the people of the land before them, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hands, with their kings and the people of the land, so that they might do with them as they would. And they took strong cities and a rich land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells

already dug, vineyards and olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance. And they ate and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in Your great goodness” (vs 24-25).

Verse 26: **But they were disobedient and rebelled against You, and cast Your Law behind their backs.** And they killed Your prophets who testified against them to turn them to You, and they worked great provocations. Therefore, You delivered them into the hand of their enemies... [not into a rest; they had to be taught a lesson just as Pharaoh was] ...who troubled them. And in the time of their trouble, they cried to You, and You heard from heaven. And according to Your manifold mercies, You gave them deliverers... [the strong men, judges, the kings like David] ...who saved them out of the hand of their enemies” (vs 26-27).

Verse 28: “But after they had rest, **they did evil again before You...** [how sad] ...Therefore, You left them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had rule over them. Yet, when they returned and cried to You, You heard from heaven.... [same old story] ...And **many times You delivered them according to Your mercies,** and testified against them **that You might bring them back to Your Law...**” (vs 28-29).

He wants His Law to be heard, and the hearing of the Law is the word that we receive. Then when we believe and act upon that, with active belief through our personal works, God knows that we have love toward Him!

“...Yet, they acted arrogantly... [all over again] ...and did not hearken to Your commandments, but sinned against Your ordinances **(which if a man do, he shall live in them)**...” (v 29).

It’s saying that if a man will do Your Law, if a man will hear Your voice and implement and obey the words that are preached to Him... Pharaoh had a chance; he could have said:

Yeah, I see, God’s doing some mighty miracles here. My magicians can’t do that and He’s done some pretty amazing things.

After the first or second plague, couldn’t Pharaoh have said at each step of the way:

Maybe this is God, maybe I ought to think about repenting.

Finally, after the sixth plague God hardened Pharaoh’s heart even harder. Pharaoh did not get a chance to enter into his rest, but here’s a promise that “...if a man do, he shall live in them” and live in the rest.

I’m going to read this verse again, but I’m

going to leave out that parenthetical statement so we get the flow:

Verse 29: “And testified against them that You might bring them back to Your Law. Yet, they acted arrogantly and did not hearken to Your commandments, **but sinned against Your ordinances and presented a stubborn shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.**”

Not only their other hardened parts. We can get our heart real hard, but then we can have a stubborn shoulder and stiffen our neck, just like the ancient Israelites did. That’s a theme throughout the Bible. Doesn’t God say, ‘You stiff-necked Israelites!’ through Moses time and again?

So, we see that other parts of our bodies can reflect our disobedience. We don’t need that! Stubborn shoulders and stiffened necks can cause deafness! ***Spiritual deafness!***

I have a stubborn shoulder, putting my fist up and that closes my ears,

I can’t hear You, God. Don’t say anything to me. Don’t talk to me!

If we get our neck all stiff:

You just think You’re going to tell me something to do. Good luck! I’m not going to do it!

I’ve been rebellious like that! Have you? ***Harden not your heart!***

If we have these components in our body and reflect our disobedience, we cannot hear the Word of God, nor can we have faith.

Verse 30: “Yet, for many years You had patience with them, and admonished them by Your spirit, through Your prophets, but they would not give ear. And You gave them into the hand of the people of the lands.”

Verse 33: But You *are* just in all that is brought upon us, for You have dealt truthfully, but we have done wickedly. And our kings, our rulers, our priests, and our fathers have not kept Your Law, nor hearkened to Your commandments and Your warnings with which You testified against them. They have not served You in their kingdom, and in Your great goodness which You gave them, and in the large and rich land which You gave before them, **neither did they turn from their evil ways**” (vs 33-35).

Does this sound a lot like Daniel’s heartfelt prayer of repentance and confession in Dan. 9? He acknowledges all of these things, and he says:

We have confusion of faith. We the people, the priests, the kings, the judges, the leaders, the rulers, everybody, our fathers, we continue to do wrong and that's why You put us into slavery.

Daniel was taken as a slave! Right after that, right after Daniel prayed that prayer—actually during that prayer—it says:

Daniel 9:20: “And **while I was speaking, and praying**, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the Holy mountain of my God; **yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel**, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, **came to me**, about the time of the evening sacrifice” (vs 20-21).

It's like God blessing Daniel! He prayed a prayer of confession and repentance, and asked for forgiveness. While he was praying, God rewarded him with something that affects us even today, down through time: the 70 weeks prophecy.

Nehemiah 9:32: “Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, Who keeps covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before You that has come upon us... [we've got a lot we're going through] ...on our kings, on our rulers, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all Your people since the time of the kings of Assyria to this day.”

Verse 36: “Behold, we *are* servants this day. And the land that You gave to our fathers to eat its fruit, and its goodness, behold, we are servants in it.... [in bondage yet again, to sin] ...And it yields much increase to the kings **whom You have set over us because of our sins**....” (vs 36-37).

Are we not subordinate to the rulers of this land, of the rulers of this world and the king of this world. Yet, in our malleable hearts—when we have softened hearts through hearing the Word of God and believing and acting on it—then we have a relationship being built with the God of salvation and mercy! We can be vessels of mercy!

“...And they... [the ‘bad guys’] are ruling over our bodies and over our livestock at their pleasure, and we *are* in great distress” (v 37).

We are servants in great distress. Look at the stinking, terrible trouble that the world is in right now! It's only going to get worse! The Beast Power is coming on the scene!

I want to recite something in passing. I gave a message about covenant and mercy a long time ago, and the point that I made with that message was

that even though we might sin, break the covenant, God still keeps His end of the bargain. He still keeps His covenant and He shows mercy and will allow us to repent.

Even though we fall short, He keeps the covenant and shows us mercy. What an amazing God He is, and He's so consistent. If you think about it, that's a very ‘cool’ attribute of God, that we can rely upon Him. The sun comes up in the East and sets in the West; there are four seasons. We have the Truth of God and it's rewarded in us. We have God's Holy Spirit and that is rewarded.

Additionally, Daniel's prayer was pretty significant, and he sited a confession of his people.

Zechariah 1:14: “So, the angel who talked with me said to me, ‘Cry aloud, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion *with a great jealousy.*”’”

- Who is spiritual Jerusalem and Zion? *The Church! The ‘exousia’; the called out ones!*
- Was it by anything we did? *No, it's by God's mercy!*

We are vessels of His mercy. He's chosen to show us mercy. Not the hardness that make us vessels of wrath!

Verse 15: “And with great anger I am angry at the heathen that are at ease... [they're having their rest] ...—*in* that I was but a little angry, but they furthered the affliction.”

God says, ‘I was a little bit angry, but now you've really got My blood boiling. Now I'm really ticked off!’

Zechariah 7:8: And the Word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, ‘Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying, “Judge true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother. And do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor. And do not imagine evil in your heart, *against* your brother”’” (vs 8-10).

Verse 11: “But they refused to hearken, and **turned a stubborn shoulder**, and made heavy their ears against hearing. And they made their hearts adamant stone against hearing the Law and the words... [the Word was being preached to them, but they wanted to have their hearts hardened] ...which the LORD of hosts has sent through His Spirit, by the former prophets. And, therefore, great wrath came from the LORD of hosts” (vs 11-12).

John 12:38: “So that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled...”

These are the Prophets of old who preached the Gospel, the Word of God to the nations, people

leaders and kings, and nobody is listening! 'I can't hear You, God, don't talk to me!'

"...who said, 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of *the* Lord been revealed?' For this *very* reason they could not believe because again Isaiah said, 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that they would not see with *their* eyes and understand with *their* hearts, and be converted, and I would heal them'" (vs 38-40).

- they could not see
- they could not believe
- they would not believe

because they wanted to come to God on their own terms! They wanted to be like Pharaoh, the god of this world back then who is representative of 'the god of this world': Satan!

2-Chronicles 36:16: "But they mocked the messengers of God and despised His words, and ill-treated His prophets until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people until there was no remedy."

There was no remedy for Pharaoh! He could not be undone, and once he had hardened his heart so far, God say, 'I'm going to continue to harden it. That's why God hardens his heart. At first Pharaoh was just hardening his heart because he knew that he had lot to lose. But then God really hardened his heart.

So, God is not wanting to harden your heart. The first instruction that we read in Heb. 3 was to *harden not your heart.*

Ezek. 11 says, ' I will give them a new heart, a new spirit, and remove the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh.' In whose heart the detestable things are recompense.

- Who would do this?
- Who would harden their own heart?
 - ✓ people who have a lot to lose
 - ✓ people who want the joys of the sins of this world
 - ✓ people who want the pleasures of sin for a season

That should not be us, brethren!

Some of the other elements that go along with lacking the Word, or refusing to hear the Word, and then refusing to believe. We're talking about a willful ignorance.

Ephesians 4:18: "Having *their* understanding darkened, being alienated... [excluded] ...from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of

their hearts."

Does this not remind you of 2-Cor. 3 and Rom. 1 where there's a willful blindness, that the veil is still on them when the reading of Moses. What does that mean? *They don't want to hear the Word of God or the commandments!*

Most of the commandments are good, but we don't want enter into the rest, which is 4th commandment, Sabbath-keeping.'

That's willful ignorance! We can avoid hardening our own heart by choosing to obey, by choosing not to be willfully ignorant; by seeking Truth!

Romans 2:5 *talks about the stubbornness:* "But you, according to your own hardness ..."

The next point is that there's *an unrepentant heart* that we can be storing up within us.

"...and unrepentant heart..." (v 5).

1-John 3 talks about closing our heart against our brother, that we don't share when we have some of this world's wealth, yet, we see our brother, our fellow human beings, in need and we don't help them and harden our heart against those who are less fortunate than us.

John says, 'How does the love of God abide in that person if he's not going to show love to his brother/neighbor.'

Jeremiah 13:10: "This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their heart and walk after other gods to serve them and to worship them, shall even be like this girdle, which is good for nothing."

Like old rotten worn out piece of dirty underwear that is worthy of throwing away!

#1 Pharaoh's bad example

#2 Harden not your heart by specifically hearing the Word of God and acting upon it through belief

III. A correlation to the circumcision of the heart to baptism to the soft, fleshy heart

Circumcision in the Old Covenant was an outward sign of the males that would signify a compliance with God's will. Even if it were done to their hurt, even when they needed to be circumcised when they were adult men, it hurt.

They still performed this ritual because it was an outward sign to God. Every male child was circumcised (Gen. 17:10).

We talk about circumcision of the flesh of your foreskin, which is removing it, cut it off, get rid of it, throw it away like so much refuse or waste.

The ancient Israelites in a sense didn't do that! They hung onto their little treasures of the cutoff piece of foreskin and made idols of them.

No, they really didn't, but *in an essence they did, because they kept the hardness of their heart!* They didn't truly circumcise their heart. They circumcised a little bit, but then they put it back on. They hardened their hearts all over again. The correlation is to circumcise a hard, stony heart is to remove it through and by faith, belief and the hearing of the Word.

It's like your car is not working and you take to the mechanic's shop and they remove and replace a relay. This electrical component is useless now, so you keep it and put it on the mantel with your mother's ashes? *NO!* It's useless piece of nothing and you dispose of it, you get rid of it. You remove and replace!

What are we removing? *The stony heart, replacing it with the soft, kind hearted, malleable, loving heart of flesh!*

Rom. 4:2-9 talks about Abraham, who was circumcised in the flesh and kept the Law, yet, it was his obedience and the promise was given to him, not only by his obedience, but also through his belief.

Why would he believe? *Because he heard the Word of God!* Abraham heard the Word of God and believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. So, Abraham circumcised his stony heart and listened to God. He was malleable and thus he became the 'father of the faithful.' What a blessing!

Colossians 2:11: "In Whom you have also been circumcised with *the* circumcision not made by hands... [not a fleshly circumcision, but of the heart, spiritually] ...in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh..." (vs 11-12).

That's what we go through at Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread. What a wonderful blessing that God has given us insight and understanding of His plan of salvation. How we have to remove sin and get rid of the stoniness of our heart and throw it away, casting it behind our backs.

"...by the circumcision of Christ... [circumcision of the heart] ...**having been buried with Him in baptism**... [see how it works] ...by which you have also been raised with *Him* through the inner working of God, Who raised Him from the dead" (vs 12).

Rom. 1:1-5—we are co-crucified with Christ! Our old man is buried, yet, do we not continue to resurrect the stinking man of flesh? Of

sin? We continue to resurrect the foreskins of our heart and reattach them.

We are to no longer be enslaved to sin! If we tie in the circumcision of the heart, not hardening our heart, we can see that our carnal heart of stone is due to:

- selfishness
- pride
- vanity
- ***IF*** this world revolves around you—your egotism, vanity and self-righteousness
- ***IF*** you're prideful—Satan's great sin
- ***IF*** you're selfish
- ***IF*** you think you deserve what others have worked for
- ***IF*** you are taking what is not yours
- ***IF*** you are going to 'get yours'
- ***IF*** others are to drop what they're doing to serve you, hearken to you, listen to you, to do what you say

THEN you might have a heart of stone!

- hardened
- selfish
- not selfless

What does the Ezek. 11:19 heart look like? Remember the new heart of flesh that God's going to give to us:

It's praying for others, not necessarily for ourselves. We can serve others and trust in God to provide for us! 'How can I help you' is our mantra, ***not:***

Give me what I need. This is what I think I want. Do it my way. Help me.

We can serve others and not only ourselves. It's not 'Babe, give me a beer.' You get up and go to the refrigerator and ask, 'Babe, do you need anything?'

That's selflessness! That should be our mantra: How can we help other people.

The point is, the circumcision of the foreskin of our heart needs to be removed. The circumcision of the heart that is hardened—the heart of stone—we need to circumcise and get rid of it, throw it away as so much dirty, filthy refuse. This is our sacrifice! To cut out the hard, bad heart:

- by choice
- by imbibing the Word of God
- by building our faith

That's how we don't harden our heart!

The evidence in our works. 'Oh, you're trying to earn salvation.' NO! I'm trying to show

God I love Him! I listen to His Word and I believe and say, ‘Yes, Lord!’ I obey Him so that I can enter into His ‘sabbatismos’—His Sabbath rest—that He’s designed, that still speaks of a time farther off (Heb. 4:9)

We see the correlation of the circumcision of the heart and the circumcision of the flesh/foreskin so that we can have a softened, loving heart.

We’ve seen three different aspects. We saw Pharaoh’s hardened heart and how he hardened his heart and God made his heart even harder.

We saw the lessons of how we are instructed not to harden our heart and there are two main aspects of that: hear the Word of God and act on that hearing and have faith, *actionable* faith, *active* faith, implementing our faith.

Then we saw that we can correlate the circumcision of the flesh in the Old Testament to the circumcision of the heart in the New Testament. That we have such a potential to enter into God’s rest!

It’s so amazing! Brethren, ***harden not your heart!*** If there is any hard-heartedness, it’s simple to repent:

- pray Daniel’s prayer
- pray it on your knees
- pray with tears’
- pray it in fasting
- pray it with belief while you’re studying His Word

Repent and circumcise the stony, Pharaoh heart. Of course, not by ourselves, but with God’s help.

May you enter into His rest by implementing His Word and belief. ***May your heart be soft, malleable and loving; of flesh that reflects the love of God!***

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- 1) Exodus 3:19-20
- 2) Exodus 4:21
- 3) Exodus 7:3
- 4) Jeremiah 20:12
- 5) Exodus 7:13
- 6) Exodus 8:15, 19, 32
- 7) Exodus 9:7, 12, 34
- 8) Exodus 10:1, 20, 27
- 9) Exodus 11:10
- 10) Exodus 14:8
- 11) Exodus 9:34-35
- 12) Romans 9:15-20, 31-33, 22-23, 30
- 13) Hebrews 3:7-8

- 14) Psalm 95:8
- 15) Hebrews 3:9-19
- 16) Hebrews 4:1-11, 9
- 17) Hebrews 3:12-14
- 18) Isaiah 57:1-2
- 19) Psalm 95:6-7
- 20) Nehemiah 9:24-30, 33-35
- 21) Daniel 9:20-21
- 22) Nehemiah 9:32, 36-37
- 23) Zechariah 1:14-15
- 24) Zechariah 7:8-12
- 25) John 12:38-40
- 26) 2 Chronicles 36:16
- 27) Ephesians 4:18
- 28) Jeremiah 13:10
- 29) Colossians 2:11-12

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Exodus 17:2-7
- Romans 1
- Ezekiel 11
- 2 Corinthians 3
- 1 John 3
- Genesis 17:10
- Romans 4:2-9; 1:1-6
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