

HARD HEADS AND HARD HEARTS

1997 by Mark Beard

Text: Hebrews 3:7-14

Have you ever witnessed a parent trying to warn a child about a danger and yet the child was determined not to listen? If anything the child was determined to engage in the activity of which he or she had been warned and sure enough the child would pay the price. We would say the child was hardheaded.

The children of Israel were famous for being hardheaded which led to a bigger problem - hardheartedness. Understand, with God, hardheadedness leads to hard hearts! God had spoken or reasoned with the children of Israel for many years. It was His desire to bring them into the promised-land 40 years before they actually arrived. But two things kept them out, hard heads and hard hearts.

They would not listen to the voice of God or to the report of faith from Joshua and Caleb--much less Moses. **THEY HARDENED THEIR HEARTS AND MISSED OUT.** Instead of living in the land flowing with milk and honey they died wandering in the wilderness. And if we are not careful it can happen to us.

I. WE MUST LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF GOD.

(v. 7) "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if you will hear his voice..."

A. What is the Holy Spirit saying?

■ Hebrews 3:12-14 reads, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;"

1. Be faithful - Not doubting (v. 12)
2. Encourage one another - don't discourage (v. 13)
3. We win only if we finish (v. 14)

B. How does the Holy Spirit speak?

1. The Holy Spirit speaks through the Word of God.

The message of God's word is a message of opportunity and hope for all those who will receive it.

■ Hebrews 4:7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." (NIV)

2. The Holy Spirit speaks by confirming the Word.

■ John 14:26 tells us, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

II. WE MUST NOT LET OUR HEARTS BECOME HARDENED.

■ *Hebrews 3:8 "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:"*

■ Ruth Graham said, "Pray for a tough hide and a tender heart".

However, Israel developed a harder hide and a tough heart. They were rarely happy for very long before they found something new that irritated them. Then they would rebel.

A. How does a heart harden?

1. Our hearts can become hardened through error.

God said in v. 10 "...they do always err in their hearts; and they have not known my ways." They didn't know God and didn't care!

■ Galatians 5:16 "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not

fulfill the lust of the flesh."

■ One preacher told his deacon board, "the only thing wrong with this church is ignorance and apathy!" "What do you think of that?" he asked one of his members. "I don't know and I don't care," responded the man.

Anytime we follow the flesh we are led into error. It is the deceitfulness of sin that will harden the heart of those who err.

2. Our hearts can be hardened through rebellion against God.

■ Stephen chastised those in the temple in Acts 7:51 when he said, "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!" (NIV)

They resisted--they rebelled--just as they were taught to do by their fathers! We need to understand that *rebellion is very often a learned behavior* and we do not need to take it lightly. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft because it is as wicked as the first one to rebel - SATAN

CONCLUSION

What is the result? God was provoked by the unbelieving, disobedient Israelites. Strong's renders the word *provocation* in Hebrews 3:8 as "*irritation*." Simply put, **God became irritated by their hardheadedness and hardheartedness.**

A fruitful relationship with God is one of *openness to the Spirit*. "*Quench not the Spirit*" the scripture says.

If you are not saved - Do not resist the convicting power of the Spirit.

If you are lukewarm - Allow the Spirit to stir up the gift that is within you.

If God is trying to teach or lead you - Do not resist his guidance.

If God is placing a calling upon your life - Do not resist the burden.

If God wants to correct you - Submit to the Holy Spirit.