

Hardness of Heart
Part 6
Hardness of Heart in Respect to Affections
Rachael and Leah – Bitterness or Contentment

- *Initially we looked at Mark 3 and hardness of heart in respect to affections.*
- *One of the main causes of having a hardened heart in the area of affections is bitterness.*
- *Jesus healed a man with a withered hand and the Pharisees' hearts were so hardened with bitterness and envy that they had no compassion on the man who was suffering.*
- *The only reaction the Pharisees displayed was hatred toward Jesus and a desire to kill Him because He had healed the man on the Sabbath.*
- *Last time we looked at bitterness in terms of getting wisdom without becoming bitter.*
- *From the story of Leah and Rachel found in Genesis we can learn some important lessons about how to avoid bitterness.*

Genesis 29:16–35 (NKJV)

¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

¹⁷Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.

- *The story begins with two sisters – Leah and Rachael.*
- *Leah's name in the Hebrew means, "weary, impatient, exhausted, grieve, to be disgusted".*
- *Rachel's name in the Hebrew means, "ewe".*
- *Rachel is described as beautiful of form and appearance.*
- *Leah is described as being "delicate of eyes".*
- *The Hebrew word for "delicate" means, "tender, weak".*
- *The Hebrew word for "eyes" not only can speak about the physical eyes but also can refer to "outward appearance".*
- *Leah had a weak appearance or she wasn't too pleasant to look at or more bluntly we could say she was homely.*
- *The younger sister was a beauty queen and the older sister was homely.*
- *Leah had done nothing wrong for her to be born unattractive in appearance and Rachel hadn't done anything special to be born a beauty queen.*
- *Based on these two simple facts one may assume that Leah would have been resentful and Rachel would have been filled with constant joy.*
- *As the story unfolds we see how these two women develop.*
- *The Bible does not condone all the actions of people that are written but simply and without reservation describes both their good and bad actions and how God intervenes.*

¹⁸Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."

- *The young bachelor Jacob comes on the scene and immediately falls in the love with Rachel the lovely and is willing to work for seven years for her hand in marriage.*

¹⁹And Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.”

²⁰So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

- *For seven years Jacob worked for Rachel’s father Laban with great joy so that he could be united in marriage with the one he loved.*

²¹Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her.”

²²And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast.

²³Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her.

²⁴And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

²⁵So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?”

²⁶And Laban said, “It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

²⁷Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.”

²⁸Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also.

²⁹And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid.

³⁰Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.

- *Laban plays the old “bait and switch” on Jacob.*
- *Jacob thinks he is marrying Rachel but he is really marrying Leah and he doesn’t realize it until the light of the morning after he has slept with her.*
- *We may feel bad for Jacob who worked seven years for a woman that he does not love but let us draw our attention to Leah the real victim of this event.*
- *Imagine the total humiliation that she would have to endure to be forced by her father to deceitfully marry a man who does not love her.*
- *Leah is a virtuous woman who experiences so much public humiliation and rejection.*
- *Jacob is forced by Laban to spend one week with Leah before he can marry Rachel.*
- *Once Jacob married Rachel he no longer gave any attention to Leah.*
- *The circumstances that Leah faced were ripe with the potential for her to become a bitter woman.*
- *She could have allowed the disappointments of life to produce a deep bitterness.*
- *She could have become bitter toward God because she was not beautiful or that she married a man who did not love her.*

- *She could have become bitter toward Laban, her father, because she was humiliated by being forced to marry Jacob deceitfully.*
- *She could have become bitter toward herself because she was homely and unloved by her husband.*
- *We must understand that when the Bible describes how Jacob married Leah and Rachel, God is not condoning this but simply stating what happened.*

Leviticus 18:18 (NIV)

¹⁸“Do not take your wife’s sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.

³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.

- *We see that the Lord saw Leah’s situation and he heard her cry and He intervened.*
- *One of the secrets to protect our hearts from bitterness is to be fully convinced of God’s goodness and faithfulness even in the midst of difficult or painful circumstance.*

³²So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, “The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.”

- *“The Lord has surely looked on my affliction” – She acknowledged that God was attentive to her state of suffering and was active in helping her.*
- *“she called his name Reuben” – Reuben in the Hebrew means, “behold a son”. Leah felt that through God giving her a son she would get Jacob’s attention and win his love.*
- *However, Jacob did not respond to Leah, but this was not due to God not caring but Jacob not responding.*
- *Leah could have become bitter through disappointment because Jacob failed to respond but she did not.*

³³Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.” And she called his name Simeon.

- *Simeon in the Hebrew means, “to hear”. Leah was confident that God had heard her and responded to her sorrowful state.*
- *We see how Leah resisted becoming bitter by acknowledging the reality of God’s involvement in her life.*
- *Leah continued to confess that God was listening to her and that He had not abandoned her during her time of trouble.*

³⁴She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” Therefore his name was called Levi.

- *“Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” - Levi in the Hebrew means, “joined” and she thought*

that this time Jacob would really connect with her and love her.

- *Even though after the third son Jacob failed to love her, Leah did not become bitter by the repetitive disappointments.*
- *God was faithful even though Jacob was unresponsive.*
- *For Leah to keep free from bitterness she had to keep her heart focused on the faithfulness of God.*

³⁵And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Now I will praise the LORD.” Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

- *“Now I will praise the LORD.” – Judah means in the Hebrew, “praise.”*
- *We see a beautiful progression of Leah’s heart toward God.*
- *She received a clear revelation of God’s love and faithfulness and began to praise the Lord even though Jacob had not changed his attitude toward her.*
- *Not only did Leah not become bitter through the painful and difficult circumstances of her life but she actually became sweeter and her heart was filled with praise for the Lord.*
- *Now lets turn our attention to Leah’s sister Rachel the beautiful.*

Genesis 30:1–8 (NKJV)

¹Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!”

- *Rachel struggled with a root of bitterness.*
- *However, unlike Leah, her life was much easier than Leah’s.*
- *Rachel was beautiful and loved by her husband and probably many, because of her life, admired her.*
- *What was the cause of Rachel’s bitterness since her life was one of a “princess”?*
- *“Rachel envied her sister” – Rachel was one who wanted to be better than others and no matter how much she had, she always compared herself with others.*
- *“Give me children, or else I die!”- Everything she had been blessed with by God and by her loving husband, Jacob, were in her eyes of no value because she couldn’t have all that she wanted.*
- *When a person is envious there is no way to ever satisfy them.*

Proverbs 27:20 (NKJV)

²⁰Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied.

- *What is the solution to overcome the lust of the eyes? Contentment.*
- *Envy blinds us to all the things we do have and focuses our attention to whatever someone else has that we do not have.*
- *Envy blinds us to the goodness and reality of God.*

Mark 15:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹But Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”

¹⁰For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them.

- *The chief priests were not bitter because of unresolved hurts or because life had been difficult for them but because they were envious of Jesus because the people were being drawn to Jesus instead of themselves.*
- *Rachel was bitter because she was so selfish that she envied her sister Leah because she had children.*
- *Rachel could not rejoice with her sister Leah that God had blessed her with children.*

²And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

- *Jacob became angry with Rachel because her demands were unreasonable and her unhappiness was unwarranted.*
- "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" – *Why would God withhold Rachel from bearing children?*
- *God did not withhold her from bearing children as an act of punishment but because God loved her and wanted her to overcome her bitterness which was fueled by her selfishness and envy.*

³So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her."

⁴Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her.

⁵And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

⁶Then Rachel said, "God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan.

- "God has judged my case" – *Rachel saw herself as having been wronged and finally God had come through to make things right.*
- *Rachel saw that she deserved all that she wanted and instead of being thankful for God's blessings she felt vindicated.*

⁷And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.

⁸Then Rachel said, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali.

- "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed." – *Rachel saw her sister as an adversary while all Leah sought was to have a healthy relationship with her husband Jacob.*
- *Rachel was a woman of conflict.*
- *When Naphtali was born she didn't even acknowledge God but saw it as an act of her strategy to put down her sister.*
- *Rachel's rejoiced more that she had prevailed against Leah than that she had a son through her concubine.*

Genesis 30:22–24 (NKJV)

²²Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

²³And she conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach.”

²⁴So she called his name Joseph, and said, “The LORD shall add to me another son.”

- So she called his name Joseph, and said, “The LORD shall add to me another son.” – *Rachel called her son Joseph which means, “he increases”.*
- *Instead of Rachel singing praises to God for the birth of Joseph, she immediately wants another son.*
- *When we have bitterness due to envy we will never be satisfied no matter how much God gives us.*

Genesis 35:16–20 (NKJV)

¹⁶Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor.

¹⁷Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, “Do not fear; you will have this son also.”

¹⁸And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

¹⁹So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

²⁰And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day.

- “Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor” – *Rachel’s labour was very painful and filled with such great distress that it resulted in her death.*
- *Rachel’s life ends on a low note and in her last minutes of her life she received what she had demanded, another son, but the final outcome for her was disappointment and sorrow.*
- *Rachel had such potential but she resisted God’s personal dealings to free her from her bitterness and her final words reflected that disappointments and sorrow.*
- “she called his name Ben-Oni” – *Ben-Oni means in the Hebrew, “son of my sorrow or trouble”*
- *Jacob renamed his son Benjamin which means, “son of the right hand.”*

Genesis 49:29–33 (NKJV)

²⁹Then he charged them and said to them: “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

³⁰in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place.

³¹There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah.

³²The field and the cave that is there were purchased from the sons of Heth.”

³³And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

- *After Rachel’s death Jacob continued to live with Leah.*
- *The Bible does not state exactly when Leah died but the interesting point is that Jacob chose to be buried with Leah!*

- *Jacob had come to appreciate and value the sweetness of Leah and her beautiful heart.*
- *Rachel never fully submitted to God so that she never experienced freedom from bitterness.*
- *Leah on the other hand kept her heart tender before the Lord even when faced with years of disappointments.*
- *In the end Rachel never fully achieved God's purposes for her life while Leah truly became that example of a godly woman.*
- *We see two women, Rachel and Leah.*
- *Both had the potential to become bitter or to become sweet.*
- *Rachel became more bitter and Leah became sweeter.*
- *How do we deal with pain so that it does not turn into bitterness?*

2 Corinthians 1:3–5 (NKJV)

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

⁴who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

⁵For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

- *Come before the Lord in prayer and just let it hurt and allow the God of all comfort to comfort us with His healing balm.*
- *Give your sorrows and pains to the Lord and do not hold onto them but allow Him to take them and comfort us.*
- *In the process His love will actually become more real and wonderful.*
- *How do we protect our hearts from bitterness that is caused by envy?*

Philippians 4:11–13 (NKJV)

¹¹Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- *“for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” – to be instructed and to come to a realization through reflection on the information given*
- *“for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” – self-sufficient and independent of circumstances.*
- *“I have learned both to be full and to be hungry” - to learn the secret of something through personal experience or as the result of initiation—“to learn a secret.”*
- *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” – This is the great secret – to depend totally on Jesus Christ and rely solely on His strength.*

1. *Let us ask God to reveal those areas in our hearts where we may have bitterness or resentment.*

2. *Let us begin to really appreciate all that God has blessed us with, beginning with the greatest gift – Eternal Life.*
3. *If there are areas of hurts or sorrows let us not hold onto them but let us turn unto the Lord and tell Him our pains and allow Him to comfort us.*