

Hardness of Heart
Part 12
Hardness of Heart in Respect to Conscience

- *Just as we have five physical senses to perceive the world around us we have five soul senses to perceive the internal condition of our soul and five spirit senses to perceive God.*

| <i>Body</i> | <i>Soul</i> | <i>Spirit</i> |
|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Hearing</i> | <i>Conscience</i> | <i>Faith</i> |
| <i>Sight</i> | <i>Imagination</i> | <i>Hope</i> |
| <i>Touch</i> | <i>Affections (phileo)</i> | <i>Love (agape)</i> |
| <i>Smell</i> | <i>Memory</i> | <i>The Fear of God</i> |
| <i>Taste</i> | <i>Reason</i> | <i>Revelation Knowledge</i> |

- *Hardness of Heart results in the inability of our hearts to sense or perceive things.*
- *Hardness of Heart results in becoming insensitive to the Holy Spirit.*
- *There are five times that hardness of heart is recorded in the gospel of Mark and it appears that each one deals with one of these soul senses.*
- *We looked at hardness of heart in terms of memory found in Mark 8:14-21*
- *The thing that causes our memory to grow callous towards God is distractions.*
- *We forget all the wonderful things God has done for us and all the things that the Holy Spirit has shown us in His Word.*
- *It is important that daily we take time to meditate upon His Word and all His faithful acts toward us.*
- *We looked at hardness of heart in terms of affections found in Mark 3:1-6.*
- *The thing that causes our affections to grow callous is bitterness.*
- *This is the classic view of hardness of heart but it only represents one of the five ways our hearts can become hardened.*
- *When our hearts are hardened by bitterness, our affections are no longer responsive; we lack compassion and empathy towards others.*
- *We can have a hardened heart toward only specific people or towards everyone in general.*
- *The solution to this type of hardness of heart is to forgive everyone from our heart and to be touched by God's love so that His love will flow through us, even those that have hurt us terribly.*
- *We can be bitter even if people have not hurt us and the solution is for us to learn to experience God's love more and more.*
- *We looked at hardness of heart in terms of reason found in Mark 6:45-52*
- *Fear hardens our hearts in the area of reason and we are unable to think rationally and we become incapable of receiving the truth of God's Word into our hearts.*

- *We need to develop a discipline of abiding in God's Word so that we are always seeing things from God's perspective.*
- *God's Word gives us the right way to perceive things and the right way to think.*
- *We looked at hardness of heart in respect to imagination in Mark 16:1-14.*
- *Repeated disappointments harden our heart in area of imagination and hope.*
- *The repeated pains of disappointment can cause a person to choose to rather live in hopeless than hope for a good outcome and experience the pain of another disappointment.*
- *The solution for this type of hardness of heart is to put our hope in the Lord and trust Him for the final outcome even if in between we experience some temporary disappointments.*
- *We are going to look at hardness of heart in respect to conscience.*
- *The physical sense of hearing corresponds to our soul sense of conscience and our spirit sense of faith.*

Romans 2:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)

- *Our conscience speaks to us regarding each individual act and decision we make and it either convicts us when we are sinning or it gives us peace when we are doing what is correct.*
- *God has given each one of us a conscience so that we can know if what we are doing is right or wrong.*
- *God therefore can speak to us through our conscience and protect us from doing things that are evil or self-destructive.*
- *However, if our hearts are hardened in the area of conscience, we will no longer be able to hear when God wants to bring correction or warnings to us.*

Titus 1:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.

- *The Greek word for "defile" is μιαινω miainō and it means, "to stain". Thus the conscience is to be kept pure white so when compared to something that is even slightly yellowed the difference will be readily visible.*
- *However, just like a pure white piece of cloth, if one is not careful to keep it away from things that can dirty or stain it, it will quickly not only become slightly discoloured but even blackened and filthy.*
- *Once our conscience has become defiled or stained, when we compare it to things that are unclean or defiled we will think they are fine because there will be no contrast between what our conscience is saying and the sin we are contemplating doing.*
- *The Bible teaches us about different degrees of hardness of heart in the area of conscience.*
- *It can range from a conscience that starts out only slight defiled or stained where we become insensitive to wrong attitudes in our hearts, all the way to*

where we have a seared conscience where nothing we do, no matter how hideous or painful to others, has any affect upon us – modern psychiatry calls such a person a psychopath.

1 Timothy 1:18–19 (NKJV)

¹⁸This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,

¹⁹having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,

- *The Bible warns us that if we do not keep a good conscience we will become spiritually shipwrecked.*
- *Our faith is like a map so we know the way and our conscience is like a compass so that we can keep on course.*
- *If our conscience has become defiled or we have compromised the authority of Scripture in our lives then it will lead us off course and into the rocky shoals of sin with the results of becoming shipwrecked spiritually.*
- *Even though the world has no remedy for a seared or even a defiled conscience, Christ is the answer.*

Hebrews 9:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

- *The wonderful news of the Gospel is that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse and restore our conscience so that it is as white as snow.*
- *We all have failed and have experienced times when our hearts have been hardened and our consciences defiled.*
- *As we study about a hardness of heart, we are not to condemn ourselves, but simply recognize areas where our hearts may have grown hard so that we can turn to Christ to cleanse and heal our hearts so that we can serve Him from this time on with a pure conscience.*

Mark 10:1–12 (NKJV)

¹Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again.

²The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” testing Him.

- *“The Pharisees came and asked Him ... testing Him” – The Greek word for “testing” is πειράζω peirazō and can mean “to obtain information to be used against a person by trying to cause someone to make a mistake; to try to trap or catch in a mistake.”*
- *The Pharisees were not simply seeking to stump Jesus with their question but their goal was to show that Jesus’ teachings were contrary to the teachings of Moses and non-sensical.*
- *The Pharisees believed that Jesus teaching on the Sabbath was too lax and His*

- teaching on divorce was too strict.*
- *What was at the heart of Jesus' teaching that made the Pharisees understand that His stand on divorce was significantly different than Moses'?*
 - *One of the central themes of Jesus' teaching was love.*

Mark 12:28–31 (NKJV)

²⁸Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?”

²⁹Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

³⁰And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

³¹And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

- *Jesus taught that the greatest command was love and that we are to firstly love God and then love our neighbours with the same tenderness and care that we wanted to be loved.*
- *To love as Jesus taught meant not to live a selfish self-serving life but one where we put God first in our lives.*
- *The Pharisees wanted to show that Jesus' teaching on love was both impractical and juxtaposed the teachings of Moses.*
- *There are three basic types of love found in Greek.*
- *There is “ἔρως” (eros) love which refers to sexual love. This is a love that is very much physical and is focused on enjoyment.*
- *There is “φιλέω” (phileō) love which refers to a friendship love. It could refer to love between husbands and wives, peers, siblings, parents and children. It is a love that is based on how the other person makes one feel.*
- *There is “ἀγάπη” (agapē) love which refers to the highest form of love which is best exemplified by God. It is an unconditional love not based on how the person treats us or how they make us feel but solely based on seeing the value of the person.*
- *God created all three types of love so that we can experience all the joys of relationships, but “agape” love is the one that is meant to undergird the first two.*
- *“Eros” love provides a special intimate and unique quality to the relationship between a husband and wife but if not undergirded by agape it becomes focused on self-gratification that leads to adultery and fornication.*
- *“Phileo” love provides the beauty of friendship love and allows us to share our hearts and lives with others but if not undergirded by agape love leads to relationships that are self-serving, undependable and motivated by personal gain.*
- *The Pharisees were motivated, like all carnally minded people, to seek those relationships that are self-gratifying. They sought prestige, the praise of men, and relationships that would benefit their pursuit of their own personal ambitions.*

- *The Pharisees brought up the question of divorce because two worldviews were coming into conflict.*
- *The Pharisees' worldview was based on self-gratification.*
- *Jesus' worldview was based on loving God first and then loving others in the same way we want to be loved.*

Mark 10 (NKJV)

³And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?"

⁴They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her."

- *"What did Moses command you?" - Jesus knew exactly their position and that they felt totally justified by the Law of Moses so He went right to the heart of the issue.*
- *"Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." – Without realizing it the Pharisees actually gave the answer that would support Jesus' teaching on love.*
- *"Moses permitted" – The Greek word for "permit" means "allow; give permission" and it can convey the idea of allowing someone to do something that you don't fully agree with but resigning yourself to the fact that they are not able or willing to change.*

Deuteronomy 24:1 (NKJV)

¹"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,

- *Moses basically said that if a man gets tired of his wife and she no longer meets his needs, wants or pleasures he could divorce her and find someone else.*
- *Even though Moses' law on divorce sounds quiet severe it actually was in one way an expression of God's mercy, but not for the man but for the woman.*
- *In Moses' Law of divorce God was showing mercy to the woman so she could be released from her husband who no longer wanted or cared for her.*
- *If the husband thought he could not be free of his unwanted wife, he may have turned to abusing her, which could eventually result in her death.*

Mark 10 (NKJV)

⁵And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

- *"Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept." – Jesus gives the real core of the issue – hardness of heart.*
- *σκληροκαρδία sklērokardia has the meaning of stubbornness of heart. It means a heart that is unbending, stiff, and rigid and is an idiom in the Greek for an uncircumcised heart and is used in Mark in respect to conscience and imagination.*
- *This type of hardness of heart deals with our conscience.*
- *What causes our hearts to become hardened in the area of conscience?*
- *Selfishness.*

- *Jesus used divorce as an example of a hardened heart in the area of conscience because marriage is a covenant and when one breaks a covenant it damages our conscience and for us to break a covenant and not have our conscience trouble us means that some hardness has occurred.*
- *Hardness of heart in the area of conscience goes far beyond the issue of divorce and really affects how we deal with people in general and view life.*
- *When people steal, lie, cheat, commit fornication or doing anything that benefits themselves at the expense of others it means that their conscience has been hardened by selfishness.*

⁶But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’

⁷For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,

⁸and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.

⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

- *Jesus now draws our attention to creation and God’s original intentions.*
- *The Pharisees turned to the Law to try to justify their selfish decisions but Jesus points to God creation plan to truly reveal the heart of God.*
- *The relationship between husband and wife is much more than just a covenant between two people but it is a prophetic picture of Christ and His Church as seen in Ephesians 5.*
- *Selfishness is a terrible bondage for we are never free to enjoy the blessings of true love that God is offering us because we are always enslaved to this taskmaster of selfishness.*
- *Selfish stops us from having truly loving relationships.*
- *Selfishness or narcissism is being totally consumed by thought about ourselves.*
- *Many come to Christ thinking it is all about themselves.*
- *They have never learned to honour Christ with their lives.*
- *What does Jesus mean to you? Is He “an add on” or is He the One you love and desire to glorify.*
- *Every aspect of our lives, those that are public and those that are private are meant to bring honour and glory to Christ.*
- *One of the great keys to overcoming temptation is to seek to honour and glorify Christ with our lives.*
- *When we choose to exalt Christ then narcissism and selfishness can no longer rule in our hearts.*

Philippians 1:21 (NKJV)

²¹For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

- *The Law was not given to overcome selfishness but to keep it in check until Christ came and fulfilled His redemptive work so through the new birth we could live an overcoming life.*

Galatians 3:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through

angels by the hand of a mediator.

- *The establishment of the Law did not reflect God's original intention but was put in place so that mankind would not totally destroy themselves.*
- *The Law pointed to the One who would restore all things back to the way God had intended for mankind and creation.*
- *God's plan for mankind: unbroken fellowship with God and one another – in other words love.*
- *The Law came in to deal with sin so that lawlessness would not rule.*
- *The Law also prepared the way for Christ.*

Hebrews 9:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

⁹It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—

- *The Old Testament sacrifices could not cleanse the conscience; only the blood of Jesus can give us a clean conscience.*

Ezekiel 36:26 (NKJV)

²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

- *The Law dealt with men whose hearts were still hardened under the Old Covenant, but under the New Covenant through our new birth in Christ we have received a new heart and a new spirit.*
- *Through the new birth we can walk in the same freedom that Jesus Christ walked in when He lived on this earth.*
- *Under Grace God's standard and expectation is not lower but higher.*

Matthew 5:48 (NKJV)

⁴⁸Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

- *God's standard for believers is to be perfect like God Himself because we are born again and Christ lives within us and He is able to live through us.*
- *If we yield to Christ, we are able by the grace of God, to live lives that are no longer controlled by our old selfish nature.*

Mark 10 (NKJV)

¹⁰In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter.

¹¹So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

¹²And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

- *The disciples were so taken aback by Jesus statement about divorce and remarriage that they had to ask him a second time what He meant.*

Matthew 19:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰His disciples said to Him, “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”

- *In fact, the disciples’ response recorded in Matthew in regards to divorce and remarriage shows their amazement at His standard.*
- *They thought that Jesus’ standard was impossible to fulfill, but that was before Christ’s redemptive death, His resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.*

James 3:2 (NKJV)

²**For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.**

- *When Scriptures expose areas we have failed in, it is not meant to condemn us but to actually free us from the bondage that sin has kept us under.*
- *How do we respond when we look back at our lives and realize we have failed in a specific area or in a specific instance?*
- *Firstly we need to recognize that we all have failed and have done things, said things and acted in ways that are have caused harm and pain to others, ourselves and God.*
- *Secondly we need to have the courage to acknowledge those areas where we have failed and sinned.*
- *Thirdly we need to be willing to make restitution, as much as possible, for what we have done wrong.*
- *Many of the things we have done in the past can’t be changed so the only thing we can do is just acknowledge that we have hurt people and ask for their forgiveness.*
- *Fourthly, it is important that we do not dwell on our past failures, but once we have acknowledged them, keep our focus on Christ and look forward to the things that God has for our lives.*

1 Corinthians 7:24 (NKJV)

²⁴**Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.**

- *In spite of all our failures, Christ called each one of us to salvation and He knew all our failures and sins but He has accepted us.*
- *This does not mean we want to continue to repeat those failures but neither do we want our past failures to hinder us from growing in Christ and fulfilling His will for our lives.*

Points of Prayer:

1. *We can thank God with grateful hearts that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sins and that we are fully accepted in Christ.*
2. *We can confess any areas of sin especially in the area of selfishness where we now recognized we have failed and ask for Him to forgive us and cleanse us.*
3. *We can ask God to empower us by His Holy Spirit so that Christ would live through us so that we can live lives that are unselfish and are for the glory of God.*
4. *If there are any here who have never received Christ as Lord and Saviour and*

are still living without God, today you can receive Him and receive forgiveness and become part of the family of God.