

Hardness of Heart
Part 11
Hardness of Heart in Respect to Imagination

- *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.*

New Slide

- *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 are going to look at hardness of heart in respect to imagination.*
- *The physical sense of sight corresponds to our soul sense of imagination.*
- *With our soul sense of imagination we picture things.*
- *With our spirit sense of hope we can see the promises of God and be assured that they will come to pass.*
- *If we are carnal Christians then our imagination is ruled by the physical realm and by the events and circumstance of this life and therefore is subject to every good and bad report.*
- *If we are spirit led Christians then our imagination is ruled by our hope in Christ and His promises and we are able to imagine those things that are not yet as if they are.*
- *This aspect of hardness of heart is found in Mark 16 and deals with the most wonderful and exciting event in the history of mankind and the disciples' initial negative response to it.*

Mark 16:1–14 (NKJV)

¹Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and

Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.

²Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

³And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?”

- *Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James were to be the first to discover the most remarkable and exciting event in the history of mankind – the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*
- *The respond of the two Marys and the disciples gives us insights into the condition of each of their hearts.*

⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large.

⁵And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

⁶But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.

“they were alarmed” - the two women had no expectation of Jesus being raised from the dead and so their initial response to the empty tomb and the angel was astonishment mixed with fright.

⁷But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”

⁸So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

⁹Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

- *“But go, tell His disciples—and Peter” - Verse seven reveals Christ’s tender heart of concern for Peter since he was not only deeply mourning the death of Jesus but his own cowardice and unfaithfulness to Him at His greatest time of suffering.*

¹⁰She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.

- *“as they mourned and wept” – The disciples are described as mourning and weeping even three days after Jesus’ death.*
- *This verse gives us a glimpse into the great depth of sorrow and emotional agony that the disciples were going through.*
- *They had just watched their Beloved Master whom they had placed all their*

hope and faith in, die in the most cruel and humiliating way.

- *Not only were the disciples overwhelmed with grief because of Jesus' sufferings, which they witnessed, but their lives were in complete turmoil because they now had no idea what to believe or what was really true.*

¹¹And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

- *“And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her” – In the midst of their agony and sorrow came the greatest news – Mary had actually seen Jesus alive!*
- *“they did not believe” – The disciples' response is as astounding as the good news that Mary had just reported to them.*
- *The disciples didn't even consider the possibility that Jesus was alive but instead chose to continue to drown in their grief and hopelessness.*

¹²After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.

¹³And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.

- *After Mary reported seeing Jesus, the Lord sends two more witnesses to the disciples who had seen Jesus alive as they were journeying from Jerusalem to Emmaus as recorded in Luke 24.*
- *“but they did not believe them either” – Even after two more witnesses reported seeing Jesus alive, they continued to refuse to believe or even consider the possibility that He was resurrected from the dead.*

¹⁴Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

- *“He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart” - Jesus appears to the disciples and equates their unwillingness to believe with hardness of heart.*
- *There are two basic words that describe hardness of heart in the New Testament and in the Gospel of Mark.*
- *πώρωσις pōrōsis has the meaning to cover with a callus and thus make one dull or insensitive and unwilling to learn or receive new ideas. This is used in Mark in terms of hardness of heart with regards to memory, affection and reason.*
- *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.

- *Therefore we see two thoughts in hardness of heart.*
- *One that means callous and therefore insensitive or unwilling to understand and thus having eyes that cannot see and having ears that cannot hear.*
- *The other is a heart that refuses to change and is stubborn and stiff-necked.*

¹⁴Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

- *“because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen” – The disciples hardness or stubbornness of heart is seen in that they refused to believe even after they had multiple eyewitnesses testify to them.*
- *“He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart” – The Greek word for rebuke is *ὀνειδίζω* *oneidizō* and it means, “reproach, scold, reprimand.”*
- *The word rebuke signifies a fairly strong scolding.*
- *What did these hardhearted disciples look like?*
- *They has been sitting around weeping and mourning for three days over what they had seen and what had happened to Jesus.*
- *This would not be what we would picture as hardhearted people but Jesus saw the root of the issue and knew it had to do with a heart that was stubborn.*
- *What causes a person’s heart to become hardened in the area of imagination and hope?*
- *Repeated disappointment can produce a hardened heart.*
- *A person whose heart is hardened in the area of imagination may not appear angry or bitter and in fact may appear tender and soft and that is why it is sometimes difficult to recognize.*
- *Why did the disciples refuse to believe the reports of those that had seen the resurrected Jesus Christ or even consider the possibility of their reports being true?*
- *They had suffered a series of such devastating disappointments starting with*

Christ's arrest, then His conviction, then His brutal flogging and finally His horrible crucifixion and death.

- *Jesus' death was something they had not even previously considered as a possibility but it had taken place.*
- *At every step of the way from Jesus' arrest, to His conviction until He was finally crucified they probably held out a hope that He would be released and continue on His ministry to establish the Kingdom of Heaven.*
- *The disciples were so devastated by their repeated disappointments that they chose not to believe the reports rather than put their hope in Jesus and His resurrection, only to find His rotting corpse.*
- *The disciples' decision not to believe the message that Jesus was raised from the dead was a result of a heart that had grown stubborn and chose rather to protect itself from further hurts of disappointments rather than to believe the good news.*
- *What causes disappointments?*
- *Wrong expectations.*
- *1. Sometimes we have wrong expectations because we misunderstand God's Word.*

John 16:33 (NKJV)

³³**These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."**

- *If we believe because we have put our faith in Christ we will not suffer tribulations and difficulties we will be greatly disappointed.*
- *For those that do not know Christ, this life is all they have and so they want to make the best of it, but for us who know Christ our real focus should be eternity.*

1 Corinthians 15:32 (NKJV)

³²**If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"**

- *"If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" – The motto of the world is let's enjoy life now because there is nothing afterwards.*
- *Suffering and tribulations to the unbelievers seems like a total waste but to us who look to eternity these things can help us to be conformed to the image of*

Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 3:3–5 (NKJV)

³that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

⁴For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

⁵For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

- *Paul knew that trials were going to come his way and he not only wanted to be prepared for them but to prepare his disciples so that they would not be disheartened by his hardships.*
- *2. Sometimes we have wrong expectations because we misunderstand God's timing.*
- *Abraham was promised a son through Sarah his wife but he had to wait 25 years before that promise was fulfilled.*
- *Joseph was given two dreams about God's purposes for his life but he had to wait 13 years before he and the circumstances around him were ready for the fulfillment of that promise.*
- *Moses had in his heart to see Israel redeemed from the bondage of Egypt but he had the wrong timing for he needed 40 years in the wilderness tending sheep before he was ready.*
- *Timing is a very important element for us to develop both faith and character.*
- *In the life of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David and in fact of all of the great men and women of faith there was always a considerable amount of time that past from the receiving of the promise of God and its fulfillment.*

Proverbs 13:12 (NKJV)

¹²Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.

- *If are not willing to wait on God's timing for His promises to be fulfilled it will result in us becoming sick hearted or feeble in our faith.*
- *Seeing God answering our prayers ignites our faith but our faith develops and matures through times of waiting on God when it appears that His promises will not come to pass.*
- *The ultimate fulfillment of all of God's Promises will happen at the resurrection.*

- *3. Sometimes we have wrong expectations because we misunderstand God's goals.*

Mark 9:31–32 (NKJV)

³¹For He taught His disciples and said to them, “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.”

³²But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

- *Jesus tried to explain to His disciples God's plan but they misunderstood the ultimate goal.*

John 3:30 (NKJV)

³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease.

- *This is our goal in life.*
- *God did not save us to give us a wonderful life.*
- *God saved us to honour Him.*
- *It takes away from our narcissism when we stop asking, “Where is this wonderful life that You promised” and we become God centered when we begin to ask, “what can I do to honour You.”*
- *If each one of us, each day asks God, “what can I do to honour You today”, we would live such wonderful lives.*

Luke 9:43–46 (NKJV)

⁴³And they were all amazed at the majesty of God. But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples,

⁴⁴“Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.”

⁴⁵But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.

⁴⁶Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest.

- *“Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest” – One of the things that stopped the disciples from understand what Christ was telling them was their wrong priorities.*
- *The disciples' goal was all about them and who was going to be the greatest and so they did not want to hear anything that would be contrary to that.*

- *Our goal in life is not the quantity of our ministry for Christ but the quality of our relationship with Christ.*
- *4. Sometimes we have wrong expectations because we misunderstand God's process.*

John 16:20–22 (NKJV)

²⁰Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

²¹A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

²²Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

- *The process that we go through to become like Christ is less like baking a pie and more like birthing a child.*
- *It is not simply a step-by-step process that can be done in a methodical way but it is something that deals with the most intimate depths of our being and requires both perseverance and times of suffering.*
- *The process is going from being narcissistic to a person that knows how to give and serve others.*
- *We start off as a nursing child that is totally narcissistic and gradually move through the stages from being a child then a young man and finally a mature man.*
- *Disappointments are meant to drive us closer to God because every time we experience a disappointment He is trying to teach us something.*
- *Sometimes when we experience disappointments God is trying to correct a misconception we have about Him or about ourselves.*
- *Sometimes when we experience disappointments it drives us to God because we realize we need to be totally dependent upon Him.*
- *Negative expectations result in our hearts being hardened in the area of imagination.*
- *The principle of thanksgiving produces the atmosphere of expectation where creative faith can operate.*

Psalm 43:5 (NKJV)

⁵Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

- *“Why are you cast down, O my soul?” – When we have suffered disappointments and we feel down cast we need to ask ourselves this question.*
- *Christ has done everything for us and we must awaken ourselves to the reality of the salvation we have received through Jesus Christ.*
- *“Hope in God” – The Hebrew word for “hope” used here means “wait” and thus when we are feeling disappointed, God is saying to us that we need to put our hope in Christ and wait for Him to bring to pass all that He has promised in His time.*
- *“For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God” – The psalmist’s hope was set on God’s faithfulness to fulfill His promises.*
- *There may be some here who have never put their faith in Christ but who recognize that life is a dead end without Christ. Today you can receive Christ as Lord and Saviour.*
- *There may be some here who have hardened their hearts because of numerous disappointments but today we can call out to God to help us to once again to put our hope in Him.*
- *There are some here who have been persevering through difficult times and are able to see the faithfulness of God and we can give thanks for what He has done and ask Him to strengthen us to trust Him even more.*