

Hardness of Heart
Part 5
Hardness of Heart in Respect to Affections
Wisdom Without Bitterness

- *Last time we looked at Mark 3 and hardness of heart in respect to affections.*
- *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.*
- *One of the main causes of having a hardened heart in the area of affections is bitterness.*
- *How can we protect our heart from bitterness?*
- *Why does God allow experiences that can cause us to become bitter?*

Genesis 2:7–9 (NKJV)

⁷And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

⁸The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

⁹And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

- *We know that everything God created was good and perfect.*
- *God created even the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and therefore it was good and it had a purpose.*

Genesis 2:15–17 (NKJV)

¹⁵Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- *Why wouldn't God want man to have the knowledge of good and evil?*

- *The Bible encourages people to be wise and see evil coming and not to be simple or foolish and fail to see evil.*

Proverbs 22:3 (NKJV)

³A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, But the simple pass on and are punished.

- *God wants us to learn wisdom without bitterness.*
- *God never said that He didn't want man to know the difference between good and evil He just said, "Don't eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."*
- *God had a very important purpose for the Tree of Knowledge and for the presence of the Serpent, which is Satan.*

Genesis 3:4–5 (NKJV)

⁴Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

⁵For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

- *The serpent's attack was directly aimed at the character of God and His motivation.*
- *"You will not surely die" – God is a liar.*
- *"God knows that in the day you eat of it you will be like God" – God is selfish and does not have your best interest at heart.*
- *There were two ways they could have receiving the knowledge of good and evil:*
 - *1. They could have believed the lies about God and eaten of the fruit.*
 - *2. They could have believed God and rejected the lies and not eaten of the fruit.*
- *By eating of the fruit of the Tree they would have learned about good and evil by tasting of sin.*
- *By choosing to trust and obey God they would have learned about good and evil by experience righteousness.*
- *Adam and Eve were not created righteous but were created innocent.*
- *Innocence speaks of purity but righteousness speak of choice and character.*

Romans 10:9 (NKJV)

⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that

God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

- *Choosing to confess the truth with our hearts and mouths produces righteousness.*
- *Every time we are confronted with a difficult or painful situation the serpent is there through our flesh to whisper that God is unfaithful but we are to choose to say, “God is faithful and His ways are perfect.”*

Ephesians 5:20 (NKJV)

²⁰**giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

- *This is the response of godly wisdom.*
- *We give thanks for everything because we speak against the lies of the flesh and declare clearly that God is always good and faithful.*
- *Adam and Eve were pure but they were also naïve. God wanted them to stay pure but He didn’t want them to remain naïve.*

Proverbs 14:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵**The simple believes every word, But the prudent considers well his steps.**

- *The Lord wanted Adam and Eve to be wise but at the same time maintain their purity.*
- *God wanted them to acquire wisdom but without bitterness.*

Romans 8:28 (NKJV)

²⁸**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**

- *The promise of Romans 8:28 was in effect even at this early stage of mankind’s history.*
- *God creating the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil so that man could know the difference between good and evil but not by eating the fruit but by rejecting the lie of the serpent.*
- *However the promise of Romans 8:28 only works if the two conditions are met:*
 - *1. We are loving God.*
 - *2. We are seeking to fulfill His purposes and not ours.*
- *If Adam and Eve had been loving God and trusting Him and seeking to do His will then it would have resulted in a great victory.*

- *What would have been the result if Adam and Eve had believed in the character of God?*

Romans 8:29 (NKJV)

²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- *It would have resulted in man becoming like God because it would have resulted in righteousness.*
- *The fall of man was not inevitable but Adam and Eve had to choose if they would trust and obey God or not.*
- *Instead of man become like God they became like Satan and this is what the Bible refers to as the sinful nature and it is located in our flesh.*
- *This seed of Satan was planted in man's flesh when Adam and Eve chose to believe Satan instead of God.*

Genesis 3:24 (NKJV)

²⁴So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

- *If man had eaten of the Tree of Life after he had sinned then they would have lived forever with the sinful nature.*
- *Through Jesus Christ's death our old sinful nature has been put to death and when this mortal corruptible body dies we will receive an immortal incorruptible body free from sin and its effects.*

Revelation 20:2 (NKJV)

²He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

- *We see clearly that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was in actual fact the Devil and Satan.*

Genesis 3:1 (NKJV)

¹Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

- *The serpent was very wise but with a wisdom that is filled with bitterness and hatred.*

- *Ezekiel 28:13-17 clearly says that Lucifer was created perfect and was the anointed cherub but that he corrupted himself by pride.*

Ezekiel 28:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷**“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you.**

- *“You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor” – Satan’s wisdom was once pure but because of his pride it became corrupted and produced bitterness.*
- *When Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil they had wisdom but it corrupted them.*
- *What did the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil taste like? It was bitter because it produced bitterness.*
- *What was the result of eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?*

Genesis 3:7–8 (NKJV)

⁷**Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.**

⁸**And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.**

- *Adam and Eve experienced shame and fear and hid from God and tried in their self-effort to cover their shame.*

Genesis 3:11–13 (NKJV)

¹¹**And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”**

¹²**Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”**

¹³**And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”**

- *Adam and Eve also became bitter and began to blame others and refused to take responsibility for their sins.*
- *Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me” - Adam blamed God and Eve.*

- The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” – *Eve blamed the serpent for deceiving her and maybe indirectly God for allowing the serpent in the Garden in the first place.*

Matthew 10:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

- *Why does God send out His sheep in the midst of wolves?*
- *Wolves are a picture of people who are particularly vicious and dangerous.*
- *Wisdom is to trust and obey God no matter what circumstances we experience.*
- *“Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” – This is the Garden of Eden scenario.*
- *We are to be wise to the traps and strategies of the devil and the flesh.*
- *The strategies and traps of the old serpent are to try to get us to agree that God is not fair to us and that we can’t trust Him.*
- *If we agree with those thoughts immediately bitterness infects our soul.*
- *What is God’s strategy?*
- *We must immediately confess that God is faithful and good and then obey Him.*
- *Putting our trust fully in God is true wisdom and wisdom that will keep our hearts pure and free from bitterness.*
- *This wisdom will produce a joy that is unquenchable.*
- *Every time we choose to trust God this is wisdom and it produces a flow of righteousness from our re-born spirit into our souls.*
- *Every time we choose to trust God it is like eating of the Tree of Life that is in our re-born spirit and it brings life and refreshing to soul.*
- *When Man chose the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil it brought in destruction and closed the way to the Tree of Life.*
- *Christ restored the possibility of choice.*
- *How did Christ reopen that possibility of choice?*

Galatians 3:13 (NKJV)

¹³Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),

- *Christ was crucified on the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and took all our bitterness, sins, curse and judgments upon Himself.*

James 3:10–18 (NKJV)

¹⁰Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

¹¹Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

¹⁵This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

¹⁶For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

¹⁷But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James 3:10–18 (NKJV)

¹⁰Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

¹¹Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

- *Wisdom is when our mouths are filled with blessings, faith, thanksgiving and praise to God.*
- *Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? - Our words should only be filled with sweet water and not with bitter.*

¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

- *The contrast between fresh and salt water is apparent since fresh water gives life while salt water cannot sustain us.*
- *Fresh water is a picture of purity while salt water is a picture of mixture (lost innocence).*

- *However, how does the comparison between figs and olives or grapevines and figs relate?*
- *What kind of tree represents the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?*

Genesis 3:7 (NKJV)

⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

- *The Fig Tree is a prophetic picture of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.*
- *The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is a picture of the Law.*
- *The Fig Tree is also a prophetic picture of Israel.*
- *Israel relates to the Law.*

John 1:45–48 (NKJV)

⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

⁴⁶And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”

⁴⁸Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

- *Philip had to leave the shadow of the fig tree so that he could meet Jesus.*
- *The Law provided some degree of protection for mankind because it puts limits on iniquity but it can never save us.*

Luke 19:4–5 (NKJV)

⁴So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.

⁵And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”

- *The sycamore tree in the Greek refers to sycamore fig tree or the Egyptian fig tree.*
- *From the height of the fig tree Zacchaeus could see Jesus Christ but he had to climb down and leave the tree to actually meet Christ.*

- *The Law will point to Jesus but we must leave the Law and by faith meet Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.*

¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

- *Olives pictures the Holy Spirit and the Anointing.*
- *The Grapevine represents our re-born spirit in Christ. (John 15)*
- *“Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives?” – Can the works of the Law bring about the things of the Spirit. It is by our faith in Christ that the grace and power of the Holy Spirit is released in our lives and not by the works of the Law.*
- *“Can a grapevine bear figs? - Can our re-born spirit produce the self-effort of the Law. Our new life in Christ does not produce the old things of the Law but it brings forth the fruit of the Spirit.*

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

¹⁵This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

¹⁶For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

- *These verses describe the demonic sensual and earthly wisdom that produces bitterness.*
- *The people of this world are wise with the bitterness of all their experiences with sin.*

¹⁷But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

- *The wisdom from God is punctuated with the word “peace”.*
- *Joseph chose God instead of bitterness.*

Genesis 41:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”

Genesis 41:38–39 (NKJV)

³⁸And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?”

³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.”

- *They all recognized the purity and wisdom that Joseph possessed was not earthly but from God.*
- *King Saul chose bitterness instead of wisdom.*
- *There were two thieves on the cross. One chose Jesus and was saved and the other chose bitterness and perished.*
- *Ask God to show us areas where we have not forgiven others that have wronged us and we are still affected by bitterness.*
- *Thank God for those areas where we have begun to see His faithfulness and goodness even during difficult and painful times.*
- *Ask God to open our eyes so that we will begin to see His goodness in everything we experience and be free from bitterness so that we can grow in godly wisdom.*