

DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEART

Hebrews 4:7

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: It seems that from the very beginning people have gone against God, although God has always had the best interest of people in mind as He has tried to be of help. Israel had a problem of always doing what God wanted and in the days of Jesus the very same people, the Jews rejected Jesus and even put Him to death. People have not changed through the centuries and today people still reject what God wants them to do. David used the term "harden one's heart" and the writer of Hebrews used that same term as he was warning the Jews once again to not harden their hearts against God and that warning applies to every single human being. When one hears from God, do not harden your heart.

I. WHAT DOES "HARDEN NOT THE HEART" MEAN?

1. The "heart" has to do with the "will."
 - Do not resist and strengthen oneself against the voice of God.
 - Do not become stubborn and rebellious, setting one's self against God's voice of mercy.
2. Children are examples of "hardening one's heart."
 - Children become stubborn against parental authority.
 - Instead of obeying, they become stubborn, determined to be disobedient.
 - Their little minds resist the truth and that is "hardening of the heart."
3. Adults act like children when they, too, resist doing what God wants them to do.

II. HOW DOES ONE HARDEN HIS/HER HEART?

1. When truth (God's Word) is presented to one's mind, to convince it, to bring about a choice, to cause one to yield to the truth, one's mind is either positively influenced by that truth or it refuses, resists the truth.
2. There are reasons that people "harden" their hearts.
 - The Jews resisted and refused to hear Jesus, they hardened their hearts against Him.
 - They already had their traditions, their particular views, their ideas, their ways, they were self-righteous and didn't want Jesus to be telling them anything different.
 - People are in danger of hardening their hearts when they hold on to something they have been taught, something they like and become jealous if anything threatens them.
 - Whenever one's ways need to be changed, there is opposition.
 - Some refuse to "join" a church because it doesn't seem to be the "right" one to join because there is some difference in it and another one that they are comparing it to.
 - People harden their hearts by putting things off.
 - "I will become a Christian, but not right now..."
 - How many people (maybe some here right now) have said that? They have put off obeying God with some lame excuse.
 - Why are YOU not a Christian?
 - People harden their hearts by refusing to be convicted of their sins.
 - They make excuses and even turn to talking about other Christians behavior, and all sort of religious reasons.
 - They defend and excuse their sins in all sort of ways.
 - People harden their hearts by being unwilling to do what is needed to become a Christian.
 - They don't want to give up certain things.
 - They don't want to do anything public

- They will ask "what is expected of me?" They don't want to count the cost and think it will be too great a sacrifice.
- They are unwilling to give up their "idols" and therefore harden their hearts.
- They see that there are a lot of things involved in listening to the voice of God and becoming a follower of Jesus Christ and therefore their hearts are hardened.

III. WHY PEOPLE SHOULD NOT HARDEN THEIR HEARTS?

1. One should not harden his/her heart because one can be saved/converted.
 - When the truth is presented to one's mind (heart) and it yields to that truth, it therefore causes a positive action.
 - Conversion is the act of the mind/heart turning from selfishness, sin and error and yielding to God's ways.
2. If one does not obey the truth when presented, it is because one has hardened him/herself against it and resists the effects of that truth.
3. One will not be saved if he/she hardens his/her heart.
 - It is resisting the Holy Spirit and God never forces anyone against his/her will.
 - The Holy Spirit strives with people to gain their free consent.
 - ***"...Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."***
 - Most people never think about the truth that they have to give their consent to be saved.
4. If one hardens his/her heart God may just stop calling that person.
 - It is not so uncommon for God to just back away from one who has hardened his/her heart.
 - Remember the Jews did so and spent many years in the wilderness.
 - God is never more merciful to one person over another. He is the same God to all.
 - God gives people the light of the truth but will give them up if they continue to resist His truth.

IV. WHOSE VOICE IS IT THAT ONE HARDENS HIS/HER HEART TO?

1. It is the voice of God.
 - Not the voice of someone evil.
 - It is the voice of mercy, compassion.
2. God knows every single person and offers to each person forgiveness.
 - How long has God called out to YOU offering YOU forgiveness and salvation?

CONCLUSION:

1. ***"...TODAY if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts..."***
2. God is trying to get the unbeliever's consent to save him/her.
3. God speaks personally to every human being with His offer of grace, mercy, pardon and salvation.
4. If one hardens his/her heart to God's call, there is nothing left for that person but an eternity in hell.
5. What more can God do than what He has already done for the welfare of mankind?
6. How can a person look God in the face and make excuses for not accepting His gift of eternal life by offering all sort of excuses and even refusing to believe what God says?
7. Have YOU been putting God off? Have YOU hardened YOUR heart? If YOU are not a Christian then YOU have hardened YOUR heart.