

## A Petrified Heart

Stone to Flesh #2

*Psalm 139:23-24 NIV - 23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

*Proverbs 28:13-14 NIV - 13 Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. 14 Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble.*

God's Spirit is in us and as we remain sensitive to Him, we will yield our hearts and our will to God, rather than rebelling and falling away.

*Hebrews 3:12-13 NLT - 12 Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. 13 You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.*

*We don't walk our journey of faith alone. We need to support one another and as Hebrews 3 tells us, we should warn one another when we see something that might lead into sin. As a group, discuss areas you should avoid that might cause a hardened heart (e.g. starting a contentious discussion that will like lead to quarreling)*

### WRAP-UP

We need to recognize the rebellious choices we make that lead us to a hardened heart. God's Spirit is available to guide us, but when we choose to ignore and disobey our hearts become hard. Let God search your heart and reveal where you need to repent and receive a heart of flesh.

### MEMORY VERSE

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*

*- Ezekiel 36:26 NIV*

### PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

*Challenge – If you are ready to do business with God, pray Ps 139:23-24 and listen for God's reply, the repent.*

### INTRODUCTION

This week is Valentine's Day, and we will see many hearts displayed as symbols of love and emotion. But in the bible, the heart is not just the source of love, it represents the source of our will and our decision-making. So, what is the condition of your heart? In this sermon series we are considering what it means to have a heart of stone or one of flesh. While God is sovereign, He has also granted us a free will. We make choices and those choices can affect the hardness of our heart. Do you know what choices you make that harden your heart, or that keep it softened and pliable? We should be aware of that, and so let's find out how to stop hardening our hearts.

### Ice Breaker

*Have you ever seen a petrified tree?*

### Key Passage

*Ephesians 4:18 NLT - 18 Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.*

### STUDY QUESTIONS

#### 1. Heart of Stone-Own Your Part

God's grace is freely offered to those who will accept Jesus as Lord, but God has also given us a free will to choose right from wrong. And we are morally responsible for our choices.

*Zechariah 7:12 NLT - 12 They made their hearts as hard as stone, so they could not hear the instructions or the messages that the LORD of Heaven's Armies had sent them by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. That is why the LORD of Heaven's Armies was so angry with them.*

*In Zechariah 7:12, what was the consequence of the people's hardened hearts? Who was responsible for hardening their hearts?*

According to the bible, the heart is the seat of our decision making. There is more than one way to make decisions. In the best case, we seek God and His truth to make choices that are pleasing to Him. However, we might choose to ignore God and do whatever we please.

*John 14:17 NLT - 17 He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.  
1 John 4:13 NLT - 13 And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.*

How do we know what is good and true? God's Holy Spirit lives in us (1John 4:13) and so we have direct access whenever we need guidance. *How do you personally sense when you are in step with God's Spirit and when you are not?*

After Jesus had fed the 5,000, walked on water and calmed the storm the disciples still didn't understand what God was doing.

*Mark 8:17-18, 21 NLT - 17 Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said, "Why are you arguing about having no bread? Don't you know or understand even yet? Are your hearts too hard to take it in? 18 'You have eyes--can't you see? You have ears--can't you hear?' Don't you remember anything at all? ... 21 "Don't you understand yet?" he asked them.*

*Matthew 16:11-12 NLT - 11 Why can't you understand that I'm not talking about bread? So again I say, 'Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.'" 12 Then at last they understood that he wasn't speaking about the yeast in bread, but about the deceptive teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

*After warning them about the "yeast of the Pharisees", Jesus reprimanded the disciples for arguing about forgetting their bread! What prevented the disciples from understanding what Jesus was referring to according to Mark 8:17? In Mat 16:12 the disciples finally understood. How did the disciples' argument reveal that they were out of step with God's Spirit?*

## **2. How to Harden a Heart**

*As you read through the next passage, what do you find Israel doing that lead to them falling away from God?*

*Hebrews 4:6-7, 11 NLT - 6 So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. 7 So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: "Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts." ... 11 So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall.*

We have already discovered that people can harden their own hearts. But what is it that we do to make our hearts hard? Hebrews Chapter 4 gives us insight into the process; it involves making a deliberate choice to ignore or disobey even though we hear God telling us what to do.

*Romans 1:28-29, 32 NLT - 28 Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. 29 Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. ... 32 They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.*

Verse 28 is an example of God allowing us free will, but our suffering the consequences of our choices.

*In our culture, as in Rome, ungodly behavior is accepted or even encouraged. That makes it easy for us to justify our disobedience to God. As you read the list of sins in verse 29, do you find yourself wanting to close your ears to some sins on that list? Do you think we harden our hearts when we murder, hate, quarrel, gossip?*

It is easy to justify quarreling with someone (especially when we are right, and they are wrong) or gossiping. But if God's Spirit lives in us, we will hear Him whispering to us that this is wrong. It is our choice to obey or not. And each time we choose to disobey and ignore God, our hearts get a little harder, our disobedience a little easier and we fall a little further.

## **3. From Petrified to Sanctified**

God has provided for us a way to soften our hardened hearts. The first step is to recognize where we are turning away and disobeying God (Ps 139:23-24). The next is to confess this before God and repent. The fear of the Lord is the antidote to a hard heart (Proverbs 28:13-4).