

HARDNESS THAT KEEPS US FROM LIFE

August 31, 2014 Various Texts by Bob Branch

MAIN IDEA: Hardness creeps very easy into our hearts, relationships, families and church, but God calls us to something better... warm-hearted love.

Hardness defined...

Toward God, hardness means we are unresponsive, stubborn, resistant, calloused and indifferent toward him.

“See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.” **Hebrews 3:12–15** (Ps. 95:7-9)

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. **Rom. 2:5**

Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. **Matthew 19:8**

“Israel are not willing to listen to me, for all the Israelites are hardened and obstinate... unyielding and hardened” **Ezekiel 3:7-8**

“But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory.” **Daniel. 5:20** (Ps. 17:10)

Toward others, hardness means we are cold, uncaring, unresponsive, unmerciful, & numb.

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold” **Mt. 24:12** Beware **Cold-Love Syndrome**. (so-media, brutal)

“... callous and unfeeling” **Psalms 119:70** (Acts 13:15)

“... hardhearted or tightfisted” **Deuteronomy 15:7**

What causes us to be hardened?

- We **disobey** and **rebel** against God. (Hebrews 3:15)
- We **refuse to listen** to what God says. (Zech. 7:12)
- We become **proud**. (Dan. 5:20)
- **Tough circumstances** happen to us. (Heb. 3:8)
- **Rule-keeping** defines our relationship with God. (2 Cor. 3:6)
- We are **sinned against**. (Mat. 18:21)
- We **harbor resentment** & bitterness. (2 Tim. 3:3; Heb. 12:15)
- We **give-in to unbelief**. (Mark 16:14; Heb. 3:19)
- We keep the **wrong company**. (1 Cor. 15:33; Prov. 6:19)

What are some of the consequences of hardness?

- ♦ Keeps God out. (**Stiff-arm effect**)
- ♦ Keeps us out of God’s **blessing** (**Bounce-off effect**)
- ♦ Keeps us out of God’s **rest** (**Rest-less effect**) (Heb. 3,4,5)
- ♦ Keeps us from **hearing God** (**Ear-plug effect**)
- ♦ Keeps us **alone**. Isolating effect. (**Desert-island effect**)
- ♦ Keeps the conduit of God’s love **from flowing into us**, and **out from us** to others. (**Plugged-fountain effect**)

What can make us tender once more?

- ♥ Repent... change your direction! (Mark 1:15)
- ♥ Return to your first love. (Rev. 2:3-5)
- ♥ Receive grace and forgiveness from Jesus. (Hebrews 12:15)
- ♥ Bring your pain to him. (Matt. 11:28)
- ♥ Forgive others. (Matt. 6:12, 14-15)
- ♥ Keep a day of rest... Sabbath. (Ex. 20:8; Heb. 4:1f)
- ♥ Get prayer and counsel. (1 Samuel 12:23)