

The Hardened Heart

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What is the diagnosis of a hardened heart. If we will read Matt.13:13-15, we will see the prophet's picture, quoted by our Lord, of a hardened heart:

"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

The word, "gross," means "fat, oily," Isa.6:9, and was used in the Greek as a medical term on a prescription. Oil is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, who takes the Word of God and nourishes the saint, the body of Christ, and applies the Word to the heart of the sinner in conviction of sin. If an individual takes in more fat than he uses up, the oil is stored in the tissues in layers, called "fat." Fat is simply cells engorged with oil, and has no nerves or blood vessels. Too much fat makes the individual lazy and inactive – a physical lethargy sets in. The final state is known as fatty degeneration, which is fatal.

When the "heart is waxed gross," fatty degeneration has set in, and the individual is in the last stages before death results. There is a point in the development of fatty degeneration at which hope of recovery fails. Now what brings about "fatty degeneration" or "gross heart" spiritually, as spoken of in Matt.13:15? Listen! The Holy Spirit is constantly feeding a people on the Word of God, applying it in conviction of sin, and the individual remains inactive, does not apply it to himself in repentance and faith, – active faith, faith that lays hold of Christ – then that "oil" of grace, which is Holy Spirit enlightenment (Heb.6:4, *"once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost..."*) is stored up in stupid lethargy, which in turns becomes a gross or fatty heart that is incapable of responding to the influence of the Holy spirit's gracious work.

In the case of Judas, we see that he sat under Jesus' teachings for 3½ years without responding to His teachings. Judas was disappointed that the Kingdom of Christ was not a material kingdom that offered honor, position, and wealth, but a cross – the death of the cross, a denying oneself, giving all and receiving only a cross. Rather than come clean and admit his mistaken concept of the Lord, he clung to his pride, and pride always seeks to preserve its reputation to the very end. He remained silent and tried to hide his inner feelings of dissatisfaction and disgust at the cost of discipleship. But in the presence of the Lord sin, self, covetousness, and pride will not remain under a cloak forever; for the Lord tries the hearts and uncovers the reins.

Judas will always make a slip, no matter how carefully he guards his feelings and his motives. At the house of Simon the leper Mary broke the box of alabaster and poured the ointment over the Lord's feet, and Judas saw another opportunity for gain slip through his fingers; in his anger he burst forth, *"To what purpose is this waste?... Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?"* In one brief glimpse he revealed his covetousness, and the "deceitfulness of sin," for he cloaked

his covetousness under his so-called love of the poor. How much self-seeking and self-love is covered by a supposed compassion for the woes of others, and the deceitful flattery given as "comfort to a burdened heart!"

There is one significant word in the 14th verse of Matt. 26 that reveals how the Lord brought to a head an exposed heart that was being hardened under His ministry for 3½ years – "**then.**" *"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?"* Why did Judas go to the chief priests and plan to betray his Master? After Judas complained over the loss of the ointment (John 12:5; Matt.26:8 – notice how he had led the other disciples to join with him in sympathy), the Lord, when he understood it, said unto them (John 12:7), *"Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."* Judas deeply resented this rebuke, and conceived in his heart immediately to seek vengeance and get even with the Lord for the open rebuke He had given him.

These are the first words we have recorded of Judas, but they serve to reveal his hidden motive, which he no doubt had been able with diabolical cunning to hide under a little religious varnish, and give his selfish interest the appearance of virtue. He had sufficiently studied the thoughts of our Lord and his disciples not to betray himself. He had even succeeded in leading others astray, as we see from Matt.26:8. It was a tender reprimand spoken so kindly and full of love that provoked such an outburst of hatred and filled his soul with revenge. Matthew says, *"from that time he sought opportunity to betray him."* As the old saying goes, he laid low until he had the situation sewed up in the bag.

A hardened heart shields itself behind the fact that it has heard the truth, knows the truth, has partaken of Holy Spirit conviction, has a sense of security in the forbearance of God, which is mistaken for God's ignorance of their motives, and a delusion which they believe is a special discernment. A hard heart is wrapped in layers of fat, or oil, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit; therefore, it is deceived by the deceitfulness of sin, pride, covetousness, self-satisfaction that rests in a vain sense of religious security, unafraid (no fear) of God's judgment, and moved by a satanic energy to thwart God's purpose, believing it is doing the will of God. This is in essence the unpardonable sin, because such a heart attributes the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, and seeks to justify himself by a "holy" zeal in discrediting the work of the Holy Spirit.

This is a point of "no return" on this downward course, where the invisible spirit of Satan takes possession of the heart given over to the deceitfulness of sin, and works directly on the will to accomplish the purpose of that heart (vengeance) until he conquers it completely. He who resented the rebuke of the loving Saviour was taken possession of by the "murderer from the beginning." Thereafter, every loving plea, every tender warning of our Lord could not be **heard**; the loving glance of the eye could not be **seen**; every word of the Lord was snatched away from his **understanding** by Satan. Thus the last pleas to return are all in vain, for the hardened sinner is now dead. But this is not the last – there is an awakening, a sudden revelation of the awfulness of the crime, decide, but only remorse – bitter remorse – is left. Suddenly, but too late, light comes, knowledge is understood – but too late, in the silent tomb of the prison house of death. Hasten without delay to Christ for the longer the sinner is detained from getting to Christ the greater his danger of that fatal self-deception. Turn while you may, and call upon Him while He is near.