

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Second Chances

Bill Brinkworth

“Oh, I’ve heard that before,” replied Gail.

“You did? When was that?” I had just spent 45 minutes telling her how to get saved; how she must know that she is a sinner; how she needed to believe that Jesus died on the Cross for her sins, and that she needed to ask Him to save her from a deserved hell.

“Well, let’s see. I’m 38 years old now, so I was about 30 when someone else told me I must ask Jesus to save me. But, there just wasn’t time then, with raising the family and all. When I was 25, I heard on the radio how I needed to trust the Lord for my salvation. I felt that I really needed to ask Jesus to save me, but I guess I just put it off.”

“Oh, yes,” she continued, “when I was about 12, someone took me to Sunday School. I remember the teacher showed me how I could be saved. Other kids got saved, but, well, I guess I felt I could do it some other time.”

“Well, Gail, you’ve heard the message before. God loves you so much that He hasn’t given up on you. He keeps

trying. How about right now asking the Lord to save you?" I pleaded.

"I, I ... just can't. Maybe some other time. I'm just not ready yet!" She again evaded the invitation.

That evening, I learned quite a bit about how God works in people's lives. It was clear He keeps trying, again and again. Most people have heard the Gospel message many times, and each time they tell God "No," by not obeying, their heart gets harder and colder to the things of God.

Probably, when Gail first heard the Good News, she was tempted to make the most important decision for her eternity. For whatever the reason she said, "No."

Her heart stiffened against the calling of the Holy Spirit in her life. It got hardened even more the second time. By the time she heard the message the third time, it was rock hard, and by all appearances, it looked like it would never be softened again. She said "no" to God, just one time too many.

Since that night, I have observed that most of the people I have talked to about the Lord, have also "heard it before." Maybe they heard it from their grandmother, parent, friend, Sunday school teacher, or even read it from a Bible tract left in a public bathroom. Many that have put their salvation off in the past will still make excuses to put it off again.

I marvel at the way God keeps on trying. He never quits on us – if there is an interest on our part. What matchless

love and compassion God has for us. How sad it is to hear one, who has heard the story before, say “No,” one more time.

One time, it will be their last opportunity. They will not have that “next chance.” Many hope that they can be saved on their deathbed. It has happened. However, there is no guarantee that they will have that opportunity. Even if they have that last chance, there is no telling if their hardened heart may say “some other time” to God’s invitation.

“Don’t put off doing what the Lord has shown you to do today. You may not have another opportunity or another tomorrow!”

A Hardened Heart

Bill Brinkworth

One of the most dangerous conditions for anyone to have, Christian or non-Christian, is mentioned in Hebrews 3. That condition is having one’s heart hardened (Hebrews 3:8).

It is not referring to a problem with one’s physical heart. It is referring to the spiritual part of a person that has determined not to do what God had urged it to do. By refusing to do what God has shown it to do, it is directly disobeying God — a most serious situation!

To make it clear to the Hebrews, Paul reminded them what hard-heartedness cost their forefathers in the

wilderness. While in the wilderness, the Jews had a wonderful opportunity to follow God to a land He had reserved for them. By day, God led them in His direction by going before them in a column of cloud that stretched from heaven to earth. When it moved, they moved. When it stopped, they stopped. At night, it changed to a column of fire. Although they had many proofs of God's helping them, they still doubted. Unbelief, the root cause of hard-heartedness (Hebrews 3:12), crept into their thoughts, and they doubted God.

This provoked God (Hebrews 3:8) and caused the Israelites to have many trials and tribulations. They missed many of the blessings they could have had, because their hearts were fixed not to believe or trust God. Because of their hardened hearts, a possibly six-day march to the land God had prepared for them took 40 years. None of the hard-hearted people ever got to see the promised land, although their offspring did. Their hearts of unbelief cost them much.

A hard-hearted condition can just as easily be obtained today, as it was then. When God shows a person what salvation is, and that they should trust Christ as Saviour today; they are hardening their heart when they postpone the decision after hearing the invitation. When their heart is shown to do something, such as being saved, faithful in church attendance, praying, reading their Bible, tithing, being baptized, or telling others about salvation; their not doing it is a direct refusal to God. Even slow obedience to

a command, or justification in not doing as they are shown, is still unbelief and distrust.

Five times (in Hebrews 3:7, 12, 13, 4:7) Paul mentioned the key to not having a hardened heart. The key is “today.” When God shows you something or quietly speaks to your heart in conviction, it is imperative that you obey Him then! Not tomorrow! Not later! It should not be open to debate! Doing it when we want, and not when He commands, is a step in hardening one’s spiritual heart.

“Is sin so luscious that you will burn in hell for it?” —

Spurgeon

Heart Problems

Bill Brinkworth

Currently, there are many excuses available for any mistake or problem in our lives. Psychologists many times blame a patient’s problem on their environment. Social workers label many behaviors as peer-pressure related. Income, hereditary, age, and race are also some of the popular excuses for wrongdoing.

Sometimes the above-mentioned excuses are legitimate; but many times, they are scapegoat excuses for the real source of the problem. The Bible often speaks of the heart as the origin of wickedness.

By “heart,” the blood-pumping organ is not what is meant, but more the center of thoughts, feelings, and our will. Not always are our evil thoughts generated by brain impulses.

There is not one location where a surgeon could, under dissection, point to and identify as, “this is where lying comes from,” or “this organ generates the desire to steal.”

It is this “heart” that Mark speaks of when he writes, “... *Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly ...*” Mark 7:1-19.

Things entering into the body cannot make us do wrong, unless our “heart” is in such a state as it would allow our bodies to perform the sin. Although many under the influence of drugs and alcohol do wrong things, it is not totally what went into their blood stream that is at fault. Their “heart” was most likely in a tolerant-to-sin state to allow such a thing to happen in the first place.

If this were not true, then any one partaking of the sin of alcohol or drugs would have the same desire to fight, rape, curse, steal, and get into more sin. This, however, does not happen every time booze is swallowed. It is the already willing, desensitized-to-sin heart, that allows a person to sin further.

Nothing entering the belly can defile the man. There is not one un-Koshered pickle, third scoop of vanilla ice cream, or anything man puts into his mouth that he should blame as the reason for his wrongdoing. The source of sin generates from man’s own “heart.”

“To sin is to walk in the way of the heart ...” — Matthew Henry