

Introduction:

1. There was a brother in the Lord's church that seemed to be a model of what a Christian should be. This man married a Christian woman. He was a family man. He was giving in his time with the local congregation. This man was a surgeon and had been blessed with a growing practice. This brother seemed to be doing all the right things. But there was a problem. This man had a terrible heart condition. His heart had become spiritually hardened over the years towards God. After twenty years of marriage he committed adultery. He left his family and he left Jesus. How did this happen? How did his heart become so hardened that he blatantly sinned against God?
2. The scriptures remind us and warn us about the danger and consequences of hardening our hearts toward God Hebrews 3:12. No matter how long we have been Christians, or how strong we think we may be in our faith, we are all susceptible to our hearts becoming hardened. This is a spiritual disease, a terrible heart condition that we must avoid. Let's take a look at an example of some people who had this disease so we can avoid it at all costs.

The Lesson:

**I. The Disease (John 12:37)**

- A. Jesus gave the multitudes sufficient evidence for them to believe that He was the Messiah.
  1. The miracles of Jesus that He performed during His ministry were done so that men could believe in Him John 20:30-31. They were designed to confirm the words that He spoke about Himself as the Messiah.
  2. The problem with the Jews was that, despite the evidence, they continuously rejected His signs John 12:37. We need to be aware of the danger of rejecting God. God has given us evidence of Himself through His word. There is a danger for us in rejecting His will and allowing our hearts to become hardened.
  3. We can refuse to listen and not believe what Jesus tells us. The brother that I mentioned earlier had attended service every week while he was cheating on his wife. Some Christians sit in service week after week and hear the word of God and still ignore it.
    - a. Members can hear a sermon on forgiveness and still walk out of service harboring a grudge against their brother.
    - b. Members can sing about purity and still walk out of service and continue to practice sexual immorality.
- B. There are many excuses people use to reject the word of God.
  1. Why did the Jews continue to reject the signs of Jesus? Many refused to follow Him because He wasn't the Messiah that they were looking for John 6:15. Jesus didn't fit the criteria that they were looking for in the Messiah. The Jews wanted this great king that would be a great military leader and overthrow Rome. They had their minds made up on what the Messiah should be. And they were wrong.
  2. Do we have a sense of who we think Jesus should be? Have we decided to no longer listen to Jesus because His words go against the lifestyle that we want to live?
  3. There is no excuse God will accept on why we rejected Him when we stand before Him on the judgment day.
  4. We need to be aware of this dangerous disease.

**II. The Effect (John 12:37-38)**

- A. The Jews had reached a spiritual state of total defiance to God to where they could not believe in Him John 12:39-40.
  1. Their eyes had been blinded and their hearts had been hardened. How did this happen?
  2. God has given man free will. When the Jews were presented with the evidence from Jesus, they could accept it or reject it. It was not God who directly forced them not to believe.
  3. There is a common idiom (figure of speech) used in the scriptures by which God is said to actively do something, when in reality, He is merely permitting human beings to do what they want to do.

4. Sometimes the active voice is put for the passive for emphasis sake Matthew 6:13. Jesus told His disciples to petition to the Father, "Lead us not into temptation." Well, God doesn't and wouldn't lead anyone into temptation James 1:13-14. It's the idea of asking God to help us not to be overcome by temptation.
- B. The Christian can reach a state of having a defiant heart.
1. When we continuously reject the word of God, we will reach the same condition as these Jews. God will allow us to believe a lie if that is what we want to do 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12. It's so sad to see how many have convinced themselves of believing a lie.
    - a. Many have believed the lie that worship is not important Hebrews 10:25; John 4:24.
    - b. Many have believed the lie that any church will do Matthew 16:18.
  2. When we reach this stage of believing a lie and having a defiant heart, we rob ourselves of the blessings that God wants to give us. We will miss out on peace and happiness in our lives. We will miss out on all spiritual blessings. We will miss heaven.
  3. Do you remember the brother I mentioned at the beginning of the lesson? That wasn't just an illustration for the lesson. Everything that I said really happened. This brother paid the price because of his defiant heart. He got the divorce that he wanted, and at the same time he lost his right to ever be in a marriage relationship again. He lost living in his mansion with his family. Now he goes home alone. He lost his trust with his children. He lost his relationship with Jesus. These are just some of the effects of this terrible heart condition.
  4. The Jews were given the opportunity to follow Jesus. Although they rejected Him, God was still willing to give them another chance to follow Him, if they chose to. Even this brother who left his family and left the Lord, God would be willing to accept him back, if he would soften his heart and repent of his adultery.
  5. Just remember this: hardening our hearts toward God can bring severe consequences in our lives.

### III. The Cure (John 12:40)

- A. How can we avoid this type of rebellious heart?
1. We must understand that we control our hearts. We can choose to open our eyes, to understand with our hearts, and to turn. When we do this God will heal our hearts.
  2. In order for God to heal our hearts we must take responsibility for our sins when we are confronted with our shortcomings 2 Samuel 12:13. David said the three hardest words to say: "I have sinned."
  3. We must acknowledge and confess our faults immediately to God when we are confronted with our shortcomings 1 John 1:7-8.
  4. We must have a penitent heart Psalms 51:10.
- B. God is willing to give the most rebellious and defiant heart another chance.
1. I began tonight with the story of the brother who hardened his heart and left Jesus. There is a positive side to the story. After more than a year of living in sin and utter rebelliousness against his Savior, he returned to Jesus. He repented of his sin and confessed to God and to the congregation of his wicked deeds. His heart had been softened. Prayers had been answered. He was now in a right relationship with God.
  2. God has given us the solution through His word to avoid hardening our hearts.

#### Conclusion:

1. The brother that I spoke to you about made the right choice.
2. How will you respond? We can be like the Jews who hardened their hearts. Or we can be like this man and like King David. We can make the right choice.