



Hope For The Hard Heart

I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 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. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Ezekiel 36:25b-27

*For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' **Matthew 13:15***

*What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless. **Ecclesiastes 2:22-23***

*'Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. ' **Revelation 2:5***

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." **Matthew 11:28-30***

Sadly, too many of us have developed a "hard heart" or "heart of stone" at some point. Just as there are too many that experience this, there are way too many different reasons that one might do so. However, there are a couple that are more frequent and persistent than most of the others,

- *Church Hurt* - At some point we have all been there to some degree or another. Someone "in the church" either says or does something that either offends or hurts our feelings. As result of the hurt our minds and ultimately our hearts pull back from fellowship as come to believe that ALL "Christians" are like the one that offended us and if that is how it is we don't want anything to do with it, In turn, we pull away from God because we say to ourselves, "If He is a good and loving God, how is it that His followers can be like that."
- *The Idol Heart* - In the modern world there is a constant battle for our attention and affection. We even have a talent show that celebrates this in its title, *American Idol*. Our hearts grow calloused and hard because we put other things and people ahead of our relationship with the Lord. When we do so, our hearts grow colder and harder the longer that we are not near Him. Putting it bluntly when we put anything before our relationship with Him that is idolatry and throughout scripture, idolatry is described as being the same as *Adultery!* An adultress person naturally loses the passion that they once had for their first love and their heart grows cold and hard.

In either of these cases it becomes very easy for someone to become completely dejected, despondent and hopeless, BUT that is exactly while I wanted to share this message with you - There IS HOPE!! Our loving Heavenly Father has promised that He will replace our broken, cold, hard heart of stone with a heart of flesh.

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However, while He can and wants more than anything to cleanse, heal and restore us, He cannot or should I say will not do so in an involuntary manner, We have to be a willing participant. Sounds easy enough, but for some, sadly, their hearts are so hard and cold that they consider their part in this trade too high a price to pay and will choose to continue in the pain and unhappiness of a hard and broken heart.

So what does He require of us in order for us to receive this new heart of flesh? They really are not that difficult or costly when we consider what we get in return. Let's take a look at what we need to do -

- Come to Me (Matthew 11:28) - The first and most important step. Is to come back to Him. If you got hurt in the church that was *people NOT Him*. If you wandered off, He may have felt distance because you were chasing other things, but He was always right with you.
- Consider how far you have fallen (Revelation 2:5) - Acknowledge and Confess how you feel and what you have done. If we confess, then He is faithful to forgive and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9) Note, this step will likely also include having to forgive others that have hurt you,
- They might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn - Repent (Matthew 13:15, Revelation 2:5) - STOP DOING WHAT YOU ARE DOING! Turn from the direction that you have been going and return to the basics of walking with Him.
- Take my yoke upon you - Submit (Matthew 11:29-30) - Having repented, there is truly only one way to fully live this life that we are called to and that is dependent on Him and His strength. (Romans 12:1)
- Move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws - Obey (Ezekiel 36:27) What did Jesus Himself say? "If you love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15)

So what is the outcome, or result of us doing the above? What promises from the Father do these same passages reveal?

- I will cleanse you from all your impurities - As mentioned above when we confess our sins He has promised to forgive and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness.
- I will remove from you your heart of stone -
- (I) will give you a new heart
- (I will) give you a heart of flesh.
- What do we get if we summarize the last three points - Our loving Father doesn't just take our hard, dry and broken heart and put a few stitches and band-aids on it and call it good. No, He takes that old hard heart out and gives us a brand new one alive, and pumping with new life and vitality,
- (I will) put a new spirit in you
- I will put my Spirit in you
- He promises that he will not only put a new spirit within us, He will give us HIS spirit. The Holy Spirit which Jesus himself promised us from before his ascension.
- (You will) understand with your hearts - He cause to know and understand who He is and what His ways are, not just as head knowledge, but as a heart experience.
- I will heal them - He will heal and restore us from the disappointment and pain that we have suffered as the result of the words and actions of others, as well as those caused by our own poor choices.
- I will give you rest - Finally, we will ultimately find peace and rest in Him realizing that the only way to not just survive, but to thrive in this life is with complete submission and dependence on Him.

You see, it was never promised that life as a believer will be easy; just the opposite is true (John 16:33.) However, what we do know is how the story ends.

This walk, and keeping a heart of flesh and not growing cold, calloused and hard hearted will take time, work and intentionality, but as we rely on His Spirit, guidance and strength we realize that he again spoke the truth when He said "my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:30)

So my friends, if you find yourself struggling and battling because you have been hurt or simply drifted away and find yourself to have a cold, hard and broken heart, there IS Hope, Come to Him. He not only can heal and restore you, He WANTS TO!!