

# Removing the Heart of Stone

## Introduction:

It was 103°F in Hell Creek, South Dakota, one day in September 1993. Dinosaur hunter Michael Hammer was amazed at what he saw. Sticking out of the ground were the remains of a *Thescelosaurus*, a plant-eating dinosaur. The skeleton was almost complete. Hammer says he knew right away that it was "very special." Scientists reported that inside the dinosaur's chest was what seems to be a stone heart--the first dinosaur heart ever seen.

**Having a stone heart usually is not a good thing.** Cher had a line in a song that said: "don't you wish sometimes you had a heart made of stone?" Having a heart made of stone is not exactly something we should long for. We see that in the book of Ezekiel the prophet was calling the exiled people of Israel back to the living God. He spoke of their hearts that had been turned to stone. The Bible teaches plainly that it really does matter what condition our heart is in, it really does matter what is inside of us. It goes beyond the things that we do, God is concerned about what we think and how we think.

**Before our lives can change Christ has to penetrate through more than just your mind.** Most people acknowledge the reality of God and the fact that Jesus is Lord, but it doesn't always move from a head knowledge into the heart. Jesus needs to penetrate into the hearts of those who make up His church. A little girl picked up a potato and said, "Look, Mommy, this potato is so big and nice, isn't it?" Then the mother peeled it and cut it in half. How surprised was the little girl when she saw it all black and hollow in the middle.

**There are many in the church like that.** Outwardly they look great, they look like they are growing, they look healthy because

they have all the outward signs of being a Christian, just like that potato had all the signs of being a good edible potato. Inwardly though many are rotten and hollow, and need Christ to take over inside them to make them clean. Jesus is the cure for a rotten inside.

**One of the main functions of the prophets that God raised up was for them to call the people back to God.** They would call the people to repentance, they would call the people to turn back away from their idols and false gods and turn back to the one true God. Ezekiel was one of those prophets.

**Text: [Ezekiel 11:1-19](#)**

## I. **How can you identify a hard heart?**

When you go to the doctor for a persistent problem many times a diagnosis brings a lot of comfort. A lot of times it is relieving to finally learn what was causing all of the trouble so then you can look towards the next step, which is treatment of the problem. This morning I hope that some people are able to identify a problem that may exist in their lives. In **[Psalms 139](#)**, David prayed, **search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts, see if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.** David's prayer was essentially for God to reveal his faults and innermost inadequacies.

**I don't believe that David was praying for the Lord to reveal his faults though, because he was overly excited by his own fallenness.** He wanted God to reveal to him the faults even of his heart to help him to correct the problem. That would give him a place to start.

**Jesus was really hard on the Pharisees, and the main reason was because of their hardened stone hearts.** It blows me away how people that possessed so much knowledge about God, and a

people that did so much in the name of God, could have hearts as hard as they did. **The Pharisees had hearts of stone**. They could find joy in the disgrace of a woman caught in the act of adultery and take pride in the fulfillment of the law to stone her to death. They could look at the situations of Jesus doing good and find fault in them. **Their hearts were made of stone**. The hard hearted are not always the easiest to identify however.

**Just because a person is doing certain things that we think are good does not guarantee that their heart is not stone.** Just because you come to church does not mean that your heart is not stone. Just because you read your Bible and pray does not mean that your heart is not stone. Just because you don't drink, chew or go with girls who do does not mean that your heart is not hard. In fact, it was the people that were doing those things in Jesus' day that he accused of having hard hearts made of stone. When I thought about hearts of stone a lot of names came to mind. I thought of people like Hitler, Bin Laden and other immoral people whose hearts were hardened from right from wrong.

**My name at times and many other names of people in the Lord's church could be on that list as well though.** Having a hard heart does not mean that you are an evil person; it doesn't necessarily mean you are immoral. Maybe you are doing the right things, but your heart just feels cold. God calls us to more than just going through the actions. Perhaps today we you can make a diagnosis about the condition of your heart and the good news is that the problem is treatable and there is a cure that exists.

### **1. Lost Compassion for the sick, hurting and sinner**

**One of the symptoms of a heart of stone is a loss of compassion.** One of the earmarks of our faith is the compassion that we should have for other people. There have been times in my life where I know I have been stone hearted to the sick and the sinner. There have been times that I have passed by people that

were in need of love and compassion, and I walked by unmoved. I have had periods in life where my heart was stone. Perhaps you can identify with me here. How do you feel when you see a person that cannot afford to buy their own food? Do you think to yourself that they are getting what they deserve, or that they should get a job and stop asking for handouts? The truth is, that is not how we have been called to view people and that is not how Jesus viewed people. Sometimes I respond like that, but that is revealing of a stone heart. Sometimes I am more zealous for justice to be served and people to get what they deserve than I am for people to receive grace and mercy. That is indicative of a stone heart.

**Perhaps some of you can identify with me.** **How do you feel when you learn that a brother or sister in Christ is living in sin?** Do you respond hoping that judgment will be served on them? Perhaps today you have lost your sense of compassion on the hurting. How do you respond to sinner's coming to Christ? Do you think that you'll have to wait around for this person to be baptized? **Do you still have a passion for what is going on around the world?** Our hearts should break over the very things that break the heart of God and we should be moved to action.

**Those with a stone hearts are not moved or affected by people in need of compassion.** Perhaps today you have lost your sense of love and burden for the sinner, which shows a stone heart. That needs to be chiseled.

### **2. Lost Desire to Grow and do God's will**

As Christians we are in the process of being changed and transformed into the image of God. Over time, however, many lose their desire to continue to grow in their faith and to do God's will. It is when we stop growing and stop caring to grow that we can tell that our hearts have become callused. Often times it is our own conscious choices which create opportunities for our own spiritual maturity. When we stop caring to create those opportunities we

know that our hearts are hardening.

**The Dictionary defines apathy as a lack of interest or concern, especially regarding matters of general importance or appeal; indifference. A lack of emotion or feeling.**

**People with a stone heart are apathetic.** They do not care about spiritual growth; they are perfectly content where they are in life. Someone once told a teenager that the greatest problem he faced was complacency. He responded, "Who cares?" People with stone hearts think that they are okay because of their past victories, because of how spiritual they used to be or how faithful they once were, but they are forgetful of what their heart condition is now.

**Perhaps, you have lost your desire to grow, perhaps you are apathetic toward learning God's Word.** Perhaps you long for excuses to miss church or Sunday school, perhaps your heart has turned to stone. Some have the attitude of who cares, or they don't need to grow, learn or conform more into God's image. If so it needs to be chiseled away at.

### **3. Lost Excitement in the work of God**

Another way to diagnose a stone heart is when one loses excitement in the work of God. Christians should be excited about hearing stories of victory in the kingdom, of souls be saved, of lives being changed. Christians should be excited to serve God and to be used by Him. Perhaps today you can diagnose a heart of stone. Please know that softening your heart begins by slowly chiseling away at a stone heart.

## **II. How do our hearts turn to stone?**

### **1. The Continued Practice of Sin Hardens the Heart**

One thing that will harden a person's heart faster than anything else is the **continued practice of sin**. Despite what many people will tell you, it really does matter what you do and how you act. Sin is

unique in that it usually leads to more. Usually sin starts out with something small and grows and matures into something bigger.

There is an old saying that says:

**Sow a thought reap a deed**

**Sow a deed reap a habit**

**Sow a habit reap a judgment**

### **James 1:13-15**

The reality is that we are all sinners. We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but the Scripture makes a clear separation between sinning and the continued practice of sin. **Sin is just a part of life, it is not justified and sin is wrong, and we need to strive to avoid sin, but it is the continued practice of sin, or a sinful lifestyle that hardens the heart.** Perhaps today you have stayed coming to church, but have been living in a state of sin. Perhaps it is sin that no one knows about and you have kept hidden. Perhaps you have been putting on a front and everyone thinks that you are really righteous. Let me assure you that God knows every thought and action and one day sin will be uncovered and revealed by God.

**Perhaps you haven't thought it was a very big deal, but let me tell you that sin is a big deal because it violates the nature of God.** The main trait that we learn about God in the Bible is not his love or grace, but rather his holiness. Sin violates the holiness of God and we with sin cannot come into God's presence. Sin brings about the wrath of God because He is holy. Because of sin we will all encounter God's wrath, we will face it either at judgment or we will encounter God's wrath on the cross where Jesus bore our sin and the wrath of God. **The Scripture says that God made him who knew no sin to become sin for us so that we might know the righteousness of God.** Perhaps today you have been living in constant unrepented sin and haven't thought it a big deal and you've thought that it was okay to sin because God will forgive you. It is sin that hardens the heart.

### **a. Our World's Standards are not necessarily God's standards**

Our world has tried to teach us what is right and wrong. Many in the church have bought into the lie that if it is accepted by the world that it is accepted by God, but the world's standards are not necessarily God's standards.

### **Ezekiel 11:12**

I want you to know plainly that sin is a big deal essentially because of what you are saying when you are living in a constant state of sin. One of the speakers at camp said that sin is us essentially saying that we want to kill God and take his place on the throne. I think that is true when you take sin to its next logical step. **Sin is violating the law of God and us saying that we do not have to submit to the authority of God.** Sin is a big deal and it is sin that separates us from God. I want you to be aware that the continued practice of sin hardens the heart to stone. I want to encourage you if you are living in sin, repent, and don't live in it any longer. The continued practice of sin will magnify into greater sin and eventually a hardened heart.

### **2. The Removal From God's Presence and People Hardens the Heart**

I love to watch a good fire burn. To me it is really cool to watch how when you put a bunch of logs together they can make a huge flame. When I would go to camp we would make the largest fires that were possible. One thing about those fires is that when you remove one log from the group of logs, that fire soon dies out in the one removed. It is the same with us when we are away from the presence of God and His people. A lot of people put any and everything before attending church, but let me assure you one quick way to turn your heart to stone is to stay out of the church. Missing just a few times will make one calloused and hardened. The Scriptures teach that as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

**The Fellowship God's people is important and missing church, the removal from God's presence and people hardens the heart.**

### **III. Soften Stone How do we Hearts?**

Maybe today you sit here and you realize maybe your heart has turned to stone. Maybe you are wondering what you can do for your heart to be made soft again. **I want to tell you that it begins by chiseling away at the stone.** Many things may have come into your life and slowly hardened your heart, today you can chisel away at that heart of stone. 1. The Spirit of God Chisels Away at Hard Hearts

**1. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to bring conviction to people's hearts.** It was the Holy Spirit working on the hearts of the Jews on Pentecost when they said, they were pierced to the heart. Perhaps today the Spirit is working on your hearts and bringing conviction through the Word of God, if so I hope that the conviction you may feel will be taken as a message from God. People respond all sorts of ways when they feel convicted. Some people push it off and take it as nothing. Other people heed that conviction and are thankful that God has revealed to them the errors of their ways. Maybe the Spirit of God is trying to chisel away at your heart of stone.

### **2. The Word of God Chisels Away at Hard Hearts**

The Word of God is one of the most powerful things that there is. It is the Word of God that is called the sword of the Spirit and is our weapon against the Devil. **The Word of God tells us what it is that God expects of us. We learn right from wrong and we learn God's standard. We can learn in His Word where we are not living up to what God expects.**

**It is in the Word of God that we can find help for our problems, we can claim promises that God gives us, we can learn the way of chiseling away at our hearts.**

### **3. The Fellowship of the Saints Chisels Away at Hard Hearts**

The fellowship of the saints, of God's people is one of the greatest remedies for the hard heart. There is something special about gathering in fellowship that has a way of softening the heart. If your heart is hard one of the best things you can do is consciously make a choice to be where God's people are, find opportunities to fellowship. Today, perhaps by being with God's people your heart is being chiseled away at.

### **4. The Guarding of our Hearts Chisels Away at Hard Hearts**

I believe another way that our hearts are softened and chiseled away at is by being careful what we allow into our hearts. Jesus taught plainly, that it really does matter what you allow into your hearts, because that goes to your heart and eventually will come out.

#### **Proverbs 4:23**

Perhaps, you need to guard your heart and remove some things from your way so that you are not polluting your mind and heart. By guarding your heart and keeping yourself clear from impure things you can chisel away at your hard heart.

### **5. The Repentance of Sin Chisels Away at Hard Hearts**

The best way to soften a hard heart is through repentance of sin. It is through repentance that we have the promise of wiping our slates clean and being made right. We have the promise of forgiveness of sins.

#### **1 John 1:9**

Perhaps today your heart has become hard. I want to encourage you today to repent of that sin that had held you back from God. Repentance is not just being sorry for the sins that you have committed though, it is a change in the lifestyle for the better.