

Hardness of Heart

by Charles Finney

Hardness of heart is a voluntary state of mind where the will is committed to selfishness, preventing the intelligence and sensibility from perceiving the truth.

Scripture: Psalm 95:8, Proverbs 28:14, Isaiah 6:10, Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 13:15, Mark 6:52, Mark 8:17, Mark 16:14, Ephesians 4:18, Hebrews 3:13

Topics: "Spiritual Blindness", "Hardness of Heart"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the 'Hardness of Heart' in his sermon, emphasizing how the disciples, despite witnessing miracles, failed to understand due to their hardened hearts. He explains that hardness of heart is a voluntary state of mind, influenced by selfishness, which blinds individuals to truth and affects their feelings and judgments. Finney illustrates this with examples from scripture and personal observations, showing that a hard heart leads to misunderstanding, delusion, and a lack of genuine faith. He urges listeners to self-examine and recognize the state of their hearts, as true revival and understanding come from a softened heart open to God's truth.

Transcript

"For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened." --Mark 6:52

These words were spoken of the disciples. The occasion of their utterance was this--the evening of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, Christ walked out upon the water and met his disciples, who were crossing the sea in a boat. They were much surprised and astonished to see him walk on the water; they had already forgotten the wonderful miracle which was performed before their eyes, but a few hours before, and being 'sore amazed in themselves, beyond measure,' the evangelist properly says of them, that 'they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened.'

Again, Mark 8:17. 'And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them--Why reason ye because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?'

These words were addressed to the disciples, who did not understand Christ when He warned them to 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.' They supposed that He alluded to the fact that they had come out without bread. He, perceiving their mistake, said unto them, 'Why reason ye because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your hearts hardened?' In other words, "the fact that you can so greatly mistake as to the meaning of my instruction, is sufficient

proof that your hearts are very hard."

Again, Mark 16:14. 'Afterward, He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.'

Without stopping to expound this text, I shall endeavor to show,

I. WHAT HARDNESS OF HEART IS.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF HARDNESS OF HEART ON THE STATES OF THE INTELLIGENCE AND SENSIBILITY, OR IN MORE COMMON TERMS, UPON THE OPINIONS OR JUDGMENTS AND FEELINGS OF MEN.

I. What is hardness of heart?

The above, and many other texts which might be advanced, show that hardness of heart is a voluntary state of mind. If it is a voluntary state, it must be the will in a state of choice--a will committed, for the time being, to some form of selfishness. The term hardness is appropriately used, because when the heart is in this state, it is stubborn, and will not yield to the truth, and prevents the intelligence and sensibility from perceiving, and being duly impressed by the truth. But I must pass rapidly on and show,

II. The influence of hardness of heart upon the sensibility and intelligence, or upon the opinions and feelings of men.

1. We know by consciousness, that the heart controls the attention of the mind. In other words, the intelligence is so completely under the control of the will, that its action, or attention, is directed to whatever point the heart or will pleases.

2. We also know by our own consciousness, that the attention affects the sensibility. If the attention is directed to a particular object, the feelings are of necessity excited by that object. If the attention is from any cause diverted from that object, we at once cease to feel for that object. The kind, or nature, too, of our feelings, depends on the view which the intellect takes of its object of attention. If it views it in one aspect, we are moved to certain states of feeling; and if it views it in another, we are exercised by very different feelings. The feelings then, are dependent on the perceptions of the intellect, and the intellect in turn, is controlled by the will, according as the will is more or less given up to any object, so will the attention of the intelligence be more or less directed to that object, and consequently the feelings will be more or less excited by the same object.

3. When the heart is hard, we do not consider the truth as we otherwise would. This must of necessity be true; for if the will is given up to the indulgence of any form of selfishness, of course it cannot pay a calm and dispassionate attention to the truth. Such a thing would be an impossibility, and could never be. Suppose for instance, that the mind is committed to money-making for selfish purposes; of course, all the feelings will drift in that direction, and it would be absurd to say, that while such is the case--while the will is committed, the intelligence can give serious and candid attention to the great truths of religion.

4. When the heart is hard, we do not understand truth--of course, if we do not pay attention to it, we do not understand it. Hence, in the parable of the sower, Christ represented impenitent men as 'hearing the word of the kingdom, and understanding it not.' The fact is, wicked men do not consider the truth, therefore they

do not understand it, they do not perceive it with their intellects, therefore it does not move them, it does not take hold of their feelings, and go down to the depths of their emotions, and so rouse them to action.

I wish now to illustrate this proposition--that hardness of heart affects the opinions and feelings of men--by several familiar examples; for it seems to me that the proposition is one which needs illustration rather than proof. I say then, that the truth of the proposition is illustrated,

(1.) By the case alluded to in the first text. Now the disciples of Christ were surrounded by many peculiar trials. As yet, the Holy Spirit had not descended upon them, they were comparatively ignorant of all truth, they were sorely tried by temptation, and their faith was very weak. Hence they had fallen into a state of hardness of heart; therefore little impression was made upon their minds by the miracle of the loaves. You well know the history of that transaction; how that, when the disciples asked Christ to send the multitudes away, in order that they might procure provisions, He refused to do it, and wrought a miracle for the feeding of the great company.

But, as I before said, the hearts of the disciples were so hard, that the miracle seemed to get but little hold upon them. That same night, as they were rowing hard upon the boisterous sea, Christ came to them, walking upon the water. From the evangelist, it appears that they were much surprised and sore amazed. This fact showed that the truth of his divine nature had not been fixed in their minds by the miracle, as it ought to have been. They should have remembered, that Christ would, of course, have power to walk on the water, if He possessed sufficient creative power to feed five thousand miraculously.

Instead of being surprised at the event, they should have looked upon it as a thing to be expected. The fact is, their hearts were so hard, that they did not infer from the miracle, what they ought to have inferred from it, they did not understand it as they should have understood it. So too, in the 8th chapter, 17th verse, the same truth is brought to light. Christ had warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. By this, He designed to put them on their guard against their peculiar doctrines, which doctrines were, as He well knew, particularly liable to prejudice their minds against the truth of his teachings.

He warned them to beware of that leaven, which would diffuse a pernicious influence over all their opinions and feelings. But the disciples, misunderstanding the import of Christ's warning, in the hardness of their hearts, 'reasoned among themselves,' saying, 'It is because we have no bread.' And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, why reason ye because ye have no bread? Have ye your hearts yet hardened?' In other words, 'have ye so mistaken the meaning of the miracle which I wrought yesterday, that ye cannot yet understand truth?

Is it possible that ye have so misinterpreted my instructions that ye cannot understand the plainest truth which I make known to you? Again, in the 16th chapter, 14th verse, we have another striking instance of the effect of hardness of heart upon the perception of truth. Here we are told that Christ appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.'

Yes, the minds of the disciples were not so fixed and grounded on the truth, but that they could even doubt the testimony of those who had actually seen their risen Lord. What must have been the state of their hearts? Alas! this is another instance of the influence of hardness of heart upon the perception of truth.

(2.) The case of the Jews generally, affords another striking instance of the blinding effect of hardness of heart on the intelligence. Such was the state of their hearts, that no evidence which Christ could give them could convince them of his Messiahship.

(3.) The case of careless sinners illustrates the same truth. Their views and feelings are a living illustration of the influence of hardness of heart on the intellect and sensibility; for mark, if their hearts were not hard, and they had the same light which they now possess, they would be full of the bitterest agony instead of coldness and indifference in respect to religious truth.

(4.) Cases of difficulty among brethren in the church, illustrate forcibly, the influence of hardness of heart upon the opinions and feelings of men. How many times when brethren have fallen into difficulty with each other, and have come to lay their complaints before me, as their pastor, have I thought to myself--now the only difficulty with these brethren, is, their hearts are hard. Why is it that they do not understand truth alike? Why, plainly for no other reason, than because their hearts are hard; that is, they are, for the time being, so much under the influence of selfish motives, that each looks at the object of controversy in a different light; therefore, their opinions upon the subject do really differ, and each thinks the other to be in fault. How often have I heard contending brethren, when in this state of mind, say, each of the other, "Why he is so entirely wrong, that it cannot but be, that he knows he is an arrant hypocrite, and that he lies outrageously." Now such things often arise among brethren in the church, and they may almost invariably be traced to the hardness of heart of the contending parties. The same brethren will see the subject of controversy in the same light, if their hearts are only softened. How many cases of difficulty have I known, where nothing could convince either of the parties of his fault, and so great was the contumacious obstinacy of the disputers, that the church would be obliged to take up labor with them, and would send committee after committee to them, to endeavor to prevail on them to come to an amicable adjustment of the difficulty, but all to no purpose. Quarrel they would, in spite of all that could be done to prevent it. But when prayer, earnest, effectual prayer has been offered for these brethren, and the [S]pirit has descended and softened their hearts, then there has been no more difficulty between them; the one who has been to blame, confesses more than he has been charged with, and each sees the subject in dispute, in the same light as the other.

(5.) Cases often occur in the business transactions of life, which forcibly illustrate the effect of hardness of heart upon the intelligence and sensibility. How often do men adopt and employ principles in their business matters, which they would utterly condemn, if it was not for their hardness of heart. Yes, they will do things in their business, for days, months, and even years, which they would abhor if their hearts were not hard.

(6.) The manner in which the providences of God are regarded by the mind, illustrates the same principle. When the heart is hard, God is not seen in his providences; however striking they may be, they are looked at with a cold eye, and regarded as mere common occurrences. But if the heart is not hard, they make a deep impression of it; they are regarded as blessings sent from God. If the heart is hard, they do not inspire praise; God is not looked to and thanked as the author of them. Oftentimes, affective providences occur--friends, perhaps relatives, are torn away, but we do not observe in the subjects of the affliction, any evidence that they feel their bereavement. They do not seem to realize their loss, or if they do, it is only to murmur at the dispensation of providence. Now why is this? It is because their hearts are hard; they do not see the hand of God in the providence, as they would if their hearts were not hard.

(7.) Of course the heart is not moved by the providence of God, to gratitude nor repentance, when the heart is hard.

(8.) Even miracles may not produce much impression on the mind, if the heart is hard. This was the case with the Jews. They stood out against all the evidence of miracles which Christ could produce. This was especially the case with the Scribes and Pharisees, who were hard-hearted, even above the most of their nation. Consequently, the miracles of Christ made but little impression upon them; they did not fasten conviction on their unbelieving minds; and with all their weight, they could not break down their stubborn wills.

(9.)* Persons in a hard-hearted state, will justify the most palpable wrong doing, they will have some excuse for their misdeeds, their will be some reason, which in their estimation, requires them, as an act of duty, to perform the iniquitous deed. Yes, they will even imagine that they are doing God service, when in fact, they are committing the most flagrant acts of wickedness. This was the case with Saul of Tarsus. His heart was hard, and he 'verily thought he was doing God service,' when he hunted the disciples from place to place, and delivered them over to judgment and death. So too, of the persecutors of the Church in every age--they have thought that they were doing God service. Yes, their hearts have been so hard, that they have really imagined that they were called and taught of God to do their work of death and blood, yea of hell. Nothing has been more common in the Church than this state of mind. How does it come that Papal Rome has been so zealous in the cause of hell, that she has been so busy in persecuting and destroying those whom she regards as heretics? It is because her heart has been hard, and she has been entirely mistaken as to the nature of her zeal, and misled as to the true means of promoting the glory of God.

[(10.)] Again, look at the slave-holder. See how sanctimonious he is. Perhaps he is a Church member, and it may even be that he is a doctor of divinity, and yet he has slaves. Oh! but he does it because he considers it his duty so to do; he does it in the fear of God, and with due regard to the highest well-being of the slave. Yes, he will dare to justify himself in his hellish business, and will even call it God-service. Now how can this be? I tell you it is because his heart is hard. How do you suppose he can think as he does? how can he go to the communion table, how pray in his family while he continues in this nefarious business? I say again, it is because of the hardness of his heart. The murderers of Christ did the very same thing. When Jesus was standing before the judgment bar of Pilate, they cried out with one accord, 'His blood be on us and on our children.' "What" you say, "could they be guilty of so great wickedness and blasphemy?" Yes, they were so certain that Christ was an impostor, that they were ready to take the responsibility of his murder on their own shoulders. They did not hesitate to cry out 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' What higher evidence could they give of their deep delusion, than this? Now what was the matter with them? Why were they so perfectly besotted, so lost to all sense of right and justice? Why plainly, because they were so hard-hearted, that all the evidence of his Messiahship which Christ could give them, fell to the ground, and they pursued their course of wickedness, buried in the deepest darkness of ignorance and self-delusion.

(11.) Persons whose hearts are hard, will often embrace the grossest errors, and be very zealous in defending them. Not a form of error has ever been preached, which has not found some zealous, and even self-denying advocates.

(12.) Persons in this state of mind, will often mistake the most bitter, and even ferocious zeal, for true religion. This was the case with the crusaders, and with the Catholic Church in the dark ages. Now how does it happen that people can make such an egregious mistake? We often see men in such

circumstances, or in such a state of mind, giving the highest evidence of sincerity; they are willing to lay down life itself, in the accomplishment of the most nefarious plans. Yes, they are ready to become martyrs; they will rush headlong to the stake in the maintenance of error, or in carrying out unholy plans, which they call the work of God. Now, I ask, how can this be? I answer, it is because their hearts are so hard that they are really deceived, and mistake for true religion, what is nothing more than bitter, ferocious zeal. I have often been struck with the case of the "come outers," as they are called, who go about the country, railing at the law and the priesthood, and who imagine they have a perfect fight to get up in churches, and disturb the congregations in their worship. Now these persons seem to be as certain that they are right, and that they are doing God service, as they would be if they should receive a distinct revelation from Heaven. How does this happen? Why manifestly, it is because of the hardness of their hearts. It is on this account, that they have fallen into so deep and strange a delusion.

(13.) Persons in a state of hardness of heart, often mistake the spirit of fanatical impudence for Christian faithfulness. How often do we see people going about, talking to their neighbors and others in the most outrageously impudent manner, and all under pretense of being governed by a spirit of Christian faithfulness.

(14.) Persons who are in this state of mind, often mistake the most shocking irreverence, for true faith and filial boldness. We often observe it in the prayers of such individuals, and in their conversations about God and holy things.

(15.) The entertaining of false hopes, is another manner in which the influence of hardness of heart is illustrated. People often "indulge a hope," as they call it, when the very fact that they can entertain a hope under the circumstances, shows conclusively that their hearts are very hard. Probably there is not one of you, who has not known many individuals professing Christ, whose lives have been such, that you have been struck with wonder, that they could dare to call themselves Christians. But very likely their hearts have been so hard, that they have sincerely believed themselves to be accepted of God, notwithstanding their foul deeds. This was the case with the Scribes and Pharisees who persecuted Jesus. They doubtless thought themselves to be true saints. Paul, while he was breathing the very spirit of hell, deemed himself a real servant of God. The reason why people make this mistake is, because their hearts are so hard that they are mistaken as to what Christianity is--they are utterly in the dark as to what the true spirit of religion consists in, and as to who and what Christ is.

(16.) The influence of hardness of heart is illustrated by the great difficulty which exists in overcoming false hopes. How remarkable it is, that the same persons to whom I have just alluded, are the most difficult persons in the world to be convinced that they are not Christians. Christ in his parable of the wise and foolish virgins, alluded to these individuals, when he said, "afterward came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us." Yes, those very persons who are influenced by the spirit of the devil, will often imagine that they are influenced by the [S]pirit of Christ; and they will not give up their delusion, but will soon in blindness, and at last cry, "Lord, Lord open unto us." Yes, they will not be put down by preaching, or by anything else; until at last Christ will say unto them, 'depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Think how hard their hearts must be; they will not yield their false hopes, even if an angel from heaven should warn them so to do; they will cling to them, till Christ will banish them forever, to the lake of everlasting torment.

(17.) The wonderful delusion of many in respect to their spiritual state, illustrates the influence of hardness of heart. But I will not dwell upon this head, but will remark--

(18.) The same truth is illustrated by the change of views and feelings, which every Christian has experienced, when his heart has been thoroughly subdued. How remarkable this transformation often is! When the heart is softened by the love of Christ, how differently does everything appear--how greatly are our views changed on every subject! This change extends to almost every duty, relation, and act of life. Why, let a man turn from the service of self to the service of God, from a course of sin to holiness, and he looks back on his past life with perfect horror. He sees that his past deeds have all been wrong, and he detests them, as he would if they had come from the bottomless pit itself. So too, a professor of religion often passes through a course of hardness of heart, and when he comes out into the light and liberty of the gospel, how different are all his views of what he has said and done, and of the influence which he has exerted, and of the manner in which he has used the talents which God has given him.

(19.) The influence of hardness of heart, is seen in the different effects which the same truth produces on the mind at different times. How striking is this difference? Perhaps a truth which has been heard an hundred times without any conscious effect, comes, of a sudden, to absorb the whole soul; and why is this? It is because the heart is softened and then the intellect is placed in the attitude of attention, and the truth pours its focal blaze upon the sensibility, and warms it, and melts it, and makes it as liquid as water.

(20.) Another illustration of the same truth is found in the different views we take of the Bible at different times. If the heart is hard, we take but little interest in the Bible, unless we read it for the purpose of criticism, or to gather historical facts. Its truths do not strike us as being very affecting; they do not interest us sufficiently to make us wish to devour them. But let the heart be softened, and at once how changed does the Bible seem. Why, its truths strike us so powerfully, they contain so much light, and power, and love, that they seem to set us afloat, and carry us with omnipotent energy towards God, and heaven. If a man's heart becomes thoroughly softened, he becomes so enamored of his Bible, that he sits up nights to read it: he carries it with him wherever he goes, and whether he is walking or riding, or engaged in business, he is ever pondering on its sacred truths. Yes, when his heart is hard, his Bible gets no hold upon him; but when Christ comes and softens and subdues his proud spirit, then his Bible is a new book to him; at once it introduces him into a new state of being, and makes the way of holiness light and clear before him.

REMARKS.

1. Persons often attribute the blame of their wrong doing to other things and other persons besides themselves. For instance, you will hear them complaining that the Bible is a very mysterious book, written in a very mysterious manner, notwithstanding God has said of it, that it is so plainly written that "the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein." It is strange, they will say, that I cannot understand it; why did not God make it so plain that it could be easily understood? And so they shove the fault of their sinning off their shoulders, and lay it on the Bible. Their hearts being hard, they cannot see how plainly the scriptures are revealed, especially in the doctrinal portions of them. The same is true of the manner in which the preached word is received. You will often hear people complaining of the preaching. The very preaching which at one time takes a strong hold upon them, and goes down to the very bottom of their souls, I say, this same preaching, you will hear them complaining of, at another time, "as being very dull, the same thing over and over, nothing new, out of place, &c." Now let the [S]pirit of God come and soften their hearts, and the preaching sounds entirely new to them; it is, as it were, a divine unction to their souls every time they hear it. They will be heard to say of it, "Ah that is just what we needed--very instructive--just in the right place, and just in the right time."

2. A man may be very sincere in believing a lie, and he will be so much the more sincere as his heart is the more hard. If his heart is very hard, he will lay aside all candor and will settle down in the belief of a lie so firmly that no evidence of any truth, however palpable, will in the least, move him from his falsehood. It will not be impossible for him to believe any lie, however palpable; and he will not only believe it, but he will give himself entirely up to its control; and the harder his heart is, the more confidence will he have in it, and the fewer misgivings as to its truth.

3. When a person believes a lie, and gives himself up to its influence, however sincere may be his belief, yet he is without excuse; for he creates his delusion by his own voluntary wickedness--it is forced upon him by no one.

4. It is only when the judgments or opinions are formed in a right state of heart, that a person is justified in acting in conformity to them. Many people seem to suppose that a person is pursuing a virtuous course when he acts in conformity to his real opinions, whether they are right or wrong, provided he is only sincere. Now sincerity itself may often be an evidence of great wickedness. For a man could not be sincere in pursuing a wicked course of life, or in holding on to a wrong sentiment, if his heart was right. Therefore, a man is without excuse, who does wrong, however sincere he may be in the wrong he is doing.

5. Men are the more apt to settle down and be confident in their wrong opinions and actions, in proportion to the hardness of their hearts. Perhaps when error is first broached in their minds, they have some misgivings about receiving it, but as their hearts become more hard, they are more firmly convinced of its truth, until at last, they lay aside all doubt, and come to believe the lie most sincerely. We have a striking illustration of this truth in the case of the persecutors of Christ. Doubtless when Christ first began to preach, the Scribes and Pharisees had many more misgivings as to the truth of his doctrine, than they had at the time they put Him to death. At first they listened to Him with attention, but soon their hearts grew harder, and they waxed more bold, until at last they, with the whole Jewish nation, assumed an outrageous tone, set at nought the holy Jesus, and denied all his claims to the Messiahship.

6. We often find the greatest confidence where there is the most delusion. Of all the persons that I ever met with, or heard of, I think the "come outers,["] are the most self-confident. They seem to think that they 'are the people, and that wisdom will die with them.' New perhaps in the whole world there are not seven men to be found, who are so entirely wrong in all their principles of action, as these very "come outers." I have often been struck too with the assurance of many of the antinomian perfectionists. Why, you might as well call in question the fact of their existence as to deny any of their positions. If you attempt to reason with them, and lay the axe of truth to the root of the tree of their faith, they will laugh in your face, and all your arguments will fall to the ground--so blind has their delusion made them.

7. Persons often wax more confident in the belief of a lie, in proportion as the evidence of their error thickens around them. This was the case with the Jews. In proportion as Christ heaped miracle upon miracle, and appealed to his works, to scripture, and to reason, for proofs of his [M]messiahship, just to that degree did the Jews wax confident in the belief that He was an impostor. Yes, such was the hardness of their heart, that in spite of all the light that Christ brought to bear upon them, they became steeled, and, as it were, case hardened against the truth, until at last, they were wrapped up in a delusion as fatal as can be conceived.

8. Millions, no doubt, die with a hard heart, and a firm hope of everlasting salvation. I recollect being called in my early ministry to visit a woman who lay at the point of death. Though she had been a very abandoned woman, yet she had the idea that she was a Christian; she supposed that in her youthful days she had seen Christ in a dream, and that she gave herself to the Lord at that time. Her friends tried to convince her of her error, but all to no purpose. She insisted on declaring that she was accepted of God, and that she enjoyed religion very much.

With a knowledge of this fact, I went to see her. I conversed with her sometime, endeavoring to tear her from her delusions, but all in vain; my efforts were entirely unsuccessful; at last I kneeled down and prayed, I will not say with the effectual prayer, but at any rate, the [S]pirit of the Lord descended, and tore the veil from the wretched woman's heart--and oh! what a wail of agony burst from her lips--so shrill and piercing was it, that it was heard even to the neighbors.

And she continued shrieking and shrieking, and her last mortal breath was spent in shrieking a note of bitterest agony. But the most remarkable case of the kind that ever came under my observation, was one which occurred in the city of New York, while I was preaching there. A man by the name of S---, came into the city, and married a lady who was one of my church members. She persuaded him to accompany her to Church. He appeared to be a serious man, and disposed to listen to the truth, and before long, he was hopefully converted, and from what little I saw of him in inquiry meetings, I thought he appeared very well.

I soon lost sight of him, and would occasionally inquire of his wife how he was getting on in spiritual matters. "Well, I don't know," she would say, "he is a very mysterious man--he is so constantly engaged in writing, that I see but little of him, and therefore do not know what to think of his religion." Why, what is he writing? I asked. "Well, I hardly know," said she, "he keeps his papers so closely locked up, that I hardly ever see them, but he says that he is writing a church history."

Things ran on in this way for two or three years. The man continued to profess religion, and for ought I knew, his outward walk was consistent with his profession. At last he was taken with consumption, but he did not appear to be at all alarmed, indeed he seemed to be happy at the near approach of death. Finally he inquired of his physician how long he thought he would live, and whether it was probable that he would hold out till a certain day. The physician observing his calm and happy state of mind, did not hesitate to tell him that it was not likely that he would live till the day which he named.

The man seemed to be very joyful in view of the fact. He continued apparently to enjoy religion, and as the day of his death drew near, he seemed to grow more and more spiritual. His conversation soon came to savor so much of heaven, that many people visited him on purpose to enjoy it. He seemed to delight in prayer, and in singing praise to God. By the way, all this time, he was frequently asking whether it was probable that he would live to the day which he had mentioned to his physician.

At last the morning of the day arrived, and it was evident that he was just on the eve of death. He called his friends around him, requested them to sing a hymn, bade them good-bye, telling them that he hoped to meet them in heaven, and then died. Now mark, while he was lying there, yet a warm and quivering corpse, the sheriff entered the house with a warrant for his arrest on the charge of forgery. The officer brought with him the most clear and convincing proof that the charge was well founded, indeed it was soon discovered that this very man who had just left earth to go as he hoped to heaven, had been engaged for years in a system of the most daring forgeries, which extended through this country, and even through Europe.

As soon as the dreadful fact was announced, the horror stricken wife went to the bed side of her dead husband, and turning down the cloth from his cold and pallid face, she cried out in unutterable anguish of spirit--"You wretch, how could you deceive me in this manner?" Think of that, you who are wives--think of looking on the marble face of your dead husband, and calling him a wretch. This was the most wonderful case of self-delusion that I ever met with, and it taught me this good lesson--to inquire frequently whether my opinions were being formed under the influence of a hard heart.

9. We see why confession always accompanies a true revival. When persons have become really converted, and their hearts have become softened, they are ready to say that they feel that they have done wrong in past time. So too, when professors of religion get their hearts softened, and receive new views of duty, they do not hesitate to make ample confession of past transgressions.

10. No one can be truly revived or converted, without feeling the spirit of confession. The heart is not really softened if the person is not willing to confess frankly all his past sins.

11. The manner of confessing often indicates the state of the heart. How often in my ministry have I wanted to say to people, whom I have heard attempting to vindicate themselves, even while they were pretending to confess,--"Your hearts are not yet softened, they must be hard else you would not attempt in this manner to vindicate yourselves."

12. People are often mistaken as to the real sources of difficulty in religious matters. They lay the blame of it to every one but themselves--they look for the cause of it every where else besides just where they ought to look. If religion is at a stand, they are very apt to look through community and ask, "who is in the way of the work of the Lord?" They forget that this is the question which they should ask--"Is not my heart hard--am I not indulging in wicked practices and feelings, which the hardness of my heart does not permit me to regard as wrong?"

13. It becomes each one to inquire for himself--"Is not my heart hard?" This is the duty of the minister of the gospel. He may see that religion is in a decline in his church, but before he looks around for the cause of the coldness, let him ask himself, "is not my heart hard?" Let professors of religion do this, let each one ask himself, "is not my heart hard?" Now why is it that the precious truths of the gospel do not take a deep hold of you? Why is it that your souls are not all liquid and glowing with the love of Christ? Is it not because your hearts are hard?

Beloved, shall I not ask myself, "is not my heart hard?" and will each of you ask yourself, "is my heart hard?"

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