

God created us to love Him with all of our heart and soul<sup>1</sup>. But we developed a hardness of heart and spirit, something that wrapped around us like a suit of armor. Rather than having a soft, pliable heart, our heart became like the hardest stone<sup>2</sup>. Even our neck acquired such immobility that we could not really turn our head<sup>3</sup>. We closed our ears and eyes, so that we would not even have cause in our minds to turn to God<sup>4</sup>.

We all try to hold ourselves as though we don't need God, as though we can manage all by ourselves. But that is so wrong! The ultimate example is that of Pharaoh, who hardened his heart<sup>5</sup> when confronted with God's will. Pharaoh would not let God "in", and this is definitely not the reaction God wants from us.

God punished Pharaoh for this hardness, and He also punished the Israelites for similar attitudes at various times during their history. He sometimes allowed special dispensations for creating rules because of this hardness, such as when He allowed for divorce<sup>6</sup>. Jesus, in His ministry, had to do likewise when he encountered the hardness of His disciples' hearts<sup>7</sup>. But it was not meant to be this way.

This hard shell that we create around ourselves really represents our ego. We are essentially told that we must circumcise our hearts and ears (and loosen up our neck!)<sup>8</sup>, so that we can break through our ego and open up to God.

God, through the Spirit, will help us to rid ourselves of this ego barrier<sup>9</sup> so that we are true children, loving Him with all of our hearts and souls, and not just slaves<sup>10</sup>. God's love for us, as shown through the blood shed by His most Beloved Son, has the power to dissolve, soften, and break through the outer shell of our hearts<sup>11</sup>, if we allow it to be applied. He has promised that He can give us a new heart and a new spirit, removing the stony items that we have developed in us<sup>12</sup>.

We must bring Him a broken, contrite spirit<sup>13</sup>. It is not that our spirit is broken in the sense that it does not work; but that it does block the flow of the Holy Spirit. God does not want to see us in pain, but He wants us to acknowledge that He is Lord, to recognize that He is the Higher Power. He is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit<sup>14</sup>. He wants a flow of love between Himself and mankind, and we must allow for that flow. Our "shell" must be cracked so that we can let the Holy Spirit in to dwell.

It is clear that the Holy Spirit dwells within us, as Christ promised this as a comforter or advocate<sup>15</sup>. God sends it into our hearts<sup>16</sup>, pouring it in<sup>17</sup>, and allowing us to drink of it<sup>18</sup> with the potential to be filled<sup>19</sup>. We become a temple that accommodates the residence of the Spirit, and we are responsible for protecting it<sup>20</sup>. Indeed we must continually expand the room in our hearts where He dwells, and ensure that we do not restrict the light and love<sup>21</sup> that flow from it.

And so, we must let our lights shine forth!<sup>22</sup> This will happen when our hearts break in response to God's Love, and would perhaps be like the sudden blaze of glory when Gideon's men broke the jars that covered their lamp<sup>23</sup>. This light is not just a reflection of God's glory, but the glow of God's Spirit from within<sup>24</sup>.

God watches patiently for Goodness to emerge from the spirit of man, like flowers coming up in the early spring through cracks in the broken earth<sup>25</sup>. God's joy in seeing a bloom of Goodness in the midst of tremendous struggle is like seeing shoots of a plant that penetrate a thick layer of leaves to reach the glorious power of the sun. He embraces the Goodness in us<sup>26</sup>, even though we cannot conquer sin by ourselves. Though mankind can be considered to be "steeped in sin"<sup>27</sup>, there are many stories of man doing Good in the world! God wants to see

continual, increasing production, as we lose more and more of our “self” and take on more and more of God’s Spirit. He looks for us to “bloom” in worship and obedience for His glory.

What God wants is to have His light (and righteousness) shine through us. Remember that when Moses met with God in the Tent of Meeting, Moses’ face became radiant<sup>28</sup>. This was really God’s Light coming through the cracks in Moses’ ego (he was the meekest man, after all)<sup>29</sup>. God wants His radiance to come through the cracks of our broken heart and spirit as well. It would be similar to Mary breaking the jar of alabaster<sup>30</sup>, where the aroma filled the house. Our sacrifice is a kind of aroma to Him. We must follow Him with open hearts.

The ultimate presentation of God’s light through a human body was made through Christ, who was the light of the world and the light of life<sup>31</sup>. This was heightened even more when Christ’s broken body on the cross let His light shine through most completely. His spirit was not broken however, but He opened it up willingly for us. Thus we were able to view God’s glory through Him<sup>32</sup>, as shown through His sacrificial love for us. How can we not respond to this?

1. Deuteronomy 6:5-6
2. Zechariah 7:12; “They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the Lord Almighty was very angry.”
3. 2 Chronicles 36:13; “He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God’s name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the Lord, the God of Israel.”
4. Matthew 13:15; “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.”
5. Exodus 7:13;
6. Matthew 19:8; “Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.”
7. Mark 6:52; “... for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.” (also Mark 10:5), and 8:17; Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?”
8. Acts 7:51; “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!” [Stephen, to those about to stone him]; also Deuteronomy 10:16; “Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.”
9. Deuteronomy 30:6; “The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.” and Romans 2:29; “No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.”
10. Galatians 4:7; “So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.”
11. Hebrews 4:12; “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

12. Ezekiel 36:26-27 ESV; “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”
13. Psalm 51:17; “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.”
14. Psalm 34:18; “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
15. John 14:16-18 ESV; “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.””
16. Galatians 4:6 ESV; “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!””
17. Romans 5:5 ESV; “And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”
18. 1 Corinthians 12:13 ESV; “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”
19. Ephesians 5:18 ESV; “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit”
20. 1 Corinthians 3:16 ESV; “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?” and 1 Corinthians 6:19a ESV; “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?”
21. 2 Corinthians 6:11; “We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you.”
22. Matthew 5:16; “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” and Luke 8:16; “No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light.”
23. Judges 7:16ff
24. Luke 11:36; “Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be just as full of light as when a lamp shines its light on you.”
25. refer to my story “Emerging from the Broken Earth”
26. refer to my story “Sparks of Good”
27. John 9:34
28. Exodus 34:29ff
29. Numbers 12:3 KJV
30. Mark 14:3
31. John 8:12; “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
32. Hebrews 1:3; “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”